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## **ESSAYS AND STUDIES**

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS  
AMEN HOUSE, E.C. 4  
London Edinburgh Glasgow New York  
Toronto Melbourne Capetown Bombay  
Calcutta Madras  
HUMPHREY MILFORD  
PUBLISHER TO THE UNIVERSITY



# ESSAYS AND STUDIES

BY MEMBERS OF

THE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

VOL. XXX

1944

COLLECTED BY C. H. WILKINSON

OXFORD

AT THE CLARENDON PRESS

1945

# THE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

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PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

# CONTENTS

I. THE NAVAL OFFICER IN FICTION . . . . .	7
ADMIRAL SIR HERBERT RICHMOND, K.C.B.	
II. THE HISTORY OF TOTAL WAR . . . . .	26
MAJOR-GENERAL SIR FREDERICK MAURICE, K.C.M.G., C.B.	
III. THE ART OF BEN JONSON ✓ . . . . .	35
PERCY SIMPSON	
IV. THOMAS GRAY AND THE FINE ARTS . ✓ . . . .	50
C. F. BELL	
V. NATURALISTS . . . . .	82
SIR WILLIAM BEACH THOMAS, K.B.E.	
VI. SIDELIGHTS ON THE <i>DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN</i> <i>ENGLISH</i> . . . . .	100
SIR WILLIAM CRAIGIE	



## THE NAVAL OFFICER IN FICTION

CHARACTERS in fiction are representations of types, and, like representations in painting, they range from an exact, or almost exact, reproduction of a resemblance to caricature. When we read our Thackeray we do not imagine either the Marquis of Steyne or Becky Sharp to be taken as average individuals of English life of the early eighteenth century, nor that Dickens's Micawber, Pecksniff, and Mark Tapley are representations of the community as a whole. So, too, the naval characters which occur in fiction are types, not generalizations: but they are none the less valuable for obtaining, or completing, a knowledge of the sorts of men of which the Navy, at different times, was composed. Types occur, needless to say, in every profession, and the novel is one of the great sources from which we draw our information. The biographers and the official correspondence of the great seamen, to be sure, furnish us with pictures of those who reach the higher ranks and earn the right to biographies; or occupy the positions which lead them to the writing of dispatches. But those august writings, while they tell us much of the men who occupy the upper branches of the naval tree, and interpret their characters, tell us little of the characters and behaviour of the great mass in the lower branches who never become the subjects of a biography—unless it be an autobiography and these, though valuable, are rare—or conduct a correspondence which reaches the eyes of later generations. Diaries are revealing, but again few men are diarists, particularly in the sea service. In the main it is to the writers of fiction, the essayists, the observers of human nature, that we turn to discover the many types of men who officered the Navy.

The English sea officer, like other animals and like the Navy of which he is a part, is the result of a long evolution. The officer of Elizabeth's day was different from him of King George III's, and he too from him of King George VI's. One thread runs with fair, though not complete, continuity through the centuries—the spirit of comradeship. There is no intrinsic difference between Drake's 'I must have the gentleman to haul and draw with the mariner and the mariner with the gentleman' and Nelson's 'There

can be no little jealousies between us: we are a band of brothers.' The Navy was weak when that link was weak, strong when it was strong. The great difference between the conditions of command in Drake's and Nelson's times was that in the former the highest commands at sea could only be held by one of the nobility; in the latter they could be held by the son of a country parson, of a tailor (Troubridge), or of the master of a packet (Pellew). There were more experienced seamen than Lord Howard of Effingham, men bred to the sea like Fenner, Hawkins, Frobisher, and Drake; but it was he who was Lord High Admiral when the Navy of England went out to meet the invading armada. It was the Earl of Essex who was sent in command of the great expedition to Cadiz in 1596. To be sure there were exceptions to this, as when Drake and a professional soldier, Norreys, commanded the expedition to Lisbon in 1589, and in those many smaller enterprises in the West Indies, or against Brest, when the command might lie with adventurous noblemen like Cumberland or professional seamen like Frobisher. But the two types of sea officer, the 'gentleman' and the 'seaman', existed side by side, and many a nobleman certainly became a 'seaman'. That distinction, though it faded away, faded away gradually. It existed, however, in a marked degree under James I, who, in the passion for peace, brought the Navy down to one of its lowest ebbs, discouraging the young man of family from obtaining service at sea either in the respectable guise of a pirate or in the service of foreign princes: so that a life of ease at court was preferred to one of rigour at sea. Such fleet as there then was was commanded by hangers-on of the court, men who were not seamen in the true sense. The seaman of that day was not the naval officer but the merchant sailor. Much of the work at sea, particularly in the matter of protecting shipping, was performed by armed merchantmen, and armed merchantmen were units of the main squadrons and fleets. One result of this was that the distinction between the 'gentleman' and the 'mariner' became greater, and, what was worse, that a jealousy, and an acute jealousy, developed between them, the 'gentleman' despising the 'mariner' not only on account of his social position and his rough and uncouth manners and speech, but also for his lack of military discipline and contempt of military order. The 'mariner' returned the dislike with interest, despising the 'gentleman' for his ignorance of seamanship, for his lack of understanding

of the sea and of seamen themselves, for his softness and—so he said—his want of courage. He attributed the failures at sea, of which there were more than most of us realize to-day, to the fact that the captains and officers were mere amateurs. And among the ranks of the ‘gentlemen’ themselves there was the pernicious habit of criticism of their superiors and struggling for advancement. At sea, as on land,

The General’s disdained

By him one step below: he, by the next;

That next, by him beneath.

The Revolution re-established discipline: it did it by placing the command of the fleets in the hands of military men of experience in war. The employment of ‘Generals-at-sea’ was not unlike the earlier practice when ‘command’ was the function of noblemen, trained in military art; and navigation only was the function of the seaman. But while command of the fleets was thus vested in military men, they had seamen associated with them: and the captains of the individual ships were seamen, mainly of the merchants’ navy. Good fighting men as they proved themselves in many a battle, they lacked the binding spirit of discipline, and on more than one occasion in the First Dutch War such captains abandoned their posts in battle: and the same weakness was experienced in the Dutch Navy. The military commanders showed themselves capable of meeting the experienced Dutch seamen. Blake and Monck acquitted themselves to the full against Tromp and de Ruyter. Nevertheless, it was felt that, excellently as the soldier had conducted campaigns and battles at sea, the system was wrong. Sea officers should be trained men. It was not enough that bold soldiers should come forward, without sea experience, when danger threatened. The officer’s preparation should begin in his youth. So in the year 1676 that admirable public servant, Pepys, introduced a system of entering young men, of under sixteen years of age, as volunteers, thus to encourage ‘the art and practice of navigation’ among the upper ranks of the community. Pepys’s endeavour was to make the ‘gentleman’ a true seaman. This he could do only by going to sea and serving his apprenticeship in the hard school of experience.

But the merchant seaman was still there, and the innovation did not break down the antagonism. The seaman is traditionally conservative in outlook, and clings to old customs, resenting

alterations, particularly when, as Anson's chaplain observed, they originated from persons outside their own community. Twenty years after Pepys's innovation had been made the question was still being asked and argued 'Shall we have gentlemen or tarpaulin sea-officers?' As the English people prefer compromise to logic, so the answer was a compromise. The Navy, it was decided, needed both, and the 'gentleman' must be gradually moulded into the 'tarpaulin'. A writer of the day, beginning with the remark that it seems unquestionable that he is most fit to command at sea who has made the sea his dwelling-place and seafaring his occupation, went on to point out that the way to make the rough seaman on the lower deck accept as his officer one who did not belong to his caste or have his home in Wapping, was to send the budding officer to dip his hands in pitch and tar and—and to this he attached a particular importance—to learn to obey. If the young aspirant is sent to sea to work as a seaman he will learn not only the practical work of a seaman but also not to give unreasonable orders, not to be critical of small faults, not to be harsh in punishment. So, when he reaches the rank of command, he will better be able to resist the temptations of great authority, for he will remember what it was to be under authority himself.

It was with this background that the sea officer made his appearance in the drama and in the dawn of the novel. The stage preceded the novel as the mirror of life. It afforded small opportunity for the presentation of naval character, for, in the latter part of the seventeenth century and the beginnings of the eighteenth, the naval officer can have come very little into the life of London. Those who forgathered in the coffee-houses and other places of resort where the wits, politicians, lawyers, poets, and writers were to be found saw little, and probably thought less, of the uncouth amphibian of the day. No sea officer, I think, figures in the *Spectator* or the *Tatler*. Addison, Steele, and their company show us the country gentleman, the merchant, the soldier, the lady both fashionable and unfashionable, but they could have seen little of the sea officer, who during war was at sea or at Portsmouth or Chatham and during peace was subsisting on a meagre half-pay in his village or serving in a merchant vessel: and, if he were in London, he would probably play little or no part in elegant conversation. One man there was, Defoe, who



rode through England and met all sorts and conditions of men, who may perhaps have fallen in with the naval officer: but he does not bring him into his gallery. Pirates and mutineers figure in his stories, but a few words of abuse of the naval tribe is all that he accords to the naval officer. 'Thou makest bullies Admirals, libertines Captains of men of war, cowards Commodores, and brutes leaders of men.' A sweeping generalization, indeed, which ignores the characters of such men as Leake, Shovell, Russell, and many another; though Herbert—the first Lord Torrington—might come within the scope of the indictment, according to Pepys's memoirs of the life at Tangier. That Defoe was not unacquainted with many matters relating to the sea is shown in *Robinson Crusoe* and *Captain Singleton* and by his vigorous attempt to remove injustices in the Royal Navy, particularly impressment, long absences from home and inadequate pay—matters for which he proposed remedies: but unfortunately he was a century and a half ahead of his time, and some ugly mutinies and many difficulties of manning the navy in war were needed to bring about the needed reforms.

The sea, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, was not a school for good manners, according to the contemporary dramatists. Pepys's entry of volunteers may have made seamen of gentlemen but it had turned many gentlemen into roughs. Congreve in his *Love for Love*, 1695, gives us one of the few naval characters in the person of Ben Legend,<sup>1</sup> who is apparently the son of a well-to-do middle-class father. He is a coarse brute who behaves like a bear and whose talk is all in an exaggerated sea-jargon. 'Nay, mister, I'm not dropping anchor here: about ship'—all his conversation is on these lines. His father admits that while 'Ben has parts, they need a little polishing'. Miss Prue speaks more plainly and calls him 'a strutting tar barrel' and 'a sea-calf'.

The sea officer appears in much the same form about twenty-five years later, but not in that form alone. The younger Shadwell gives us specimens of three types in *The Fair Quaker of Deal*, 1710—the tarpaulin, promoted from the forecabin or the merchant

<sup>1</sup> Two earlier stage sailors, from whom Mr. Montague Summers suggests that Congreve may possibly have taken a hint, are Captain Porpuss in *Sir Barnaby Whigg*, 1681, and Captain Darewell, 'an honest, blunt Sea Captain, true to his Country's Interest, and the Government' in *The Marriage-Hater Match'd*, 1692. Porpuss is 'a blunt Tarpawlin, Captain, and one that uses his Sea-phrases and terms upon all occasions'.

ship, the 'beau', entered and promoted by interest but with little sea experience, and the gentleman who has had his upbringing at sea but has not lost his manners or his morals. The first of these, Commodore Flip, is described as 'a most desperate Wap-pineer tar who hates the gentlemen of the Navy', gets drunk with his boat's crew, and loses no opportunity of expressing his contempt and dislike for gentleman captains who wear fine linen, want beds with sheets, and wear wigs, 'which makes 'em hate the sight of an enemy for fear bullets and gun-powder should spoil the beau wig and the laced jacket'. They are not the men, says Flip, to fight yard-arm to yard-arm with a Frenchman: down goes the flag when that occurs. He boasts of his lowly origin and of having served in every station from cook's boy to commodore. He says his men love him because he is one of their own kind who understands their jests. He is coarse, brutal, and ignorant; brave, doubtless enough, in battle. But there is little in him of Drake's spirit of comradeship, and one cannot imagine him devising a new tactic or conducting a campaign.

In contrast to Flip there is his extreme opposite, Captain Mizen. In him Shadwell ridicules the 'beau', whom he dresses in fine linen, who scents himself, has his cabin fitted with looking-glasses, uses wax candles, and is waited on by servants. He is an absurd and finicking creature. He dislikes the sea language, which he wishes to reform as well as the manners of the sailor. He is no seaman. Such may have been those captains, Kirby and Wade, who deserted old John Benbow in his fight with Du Casse when Benbow was wounded:

And there Captain Kirby proved a coward at last  
And with Wade played at bo-peep behind the main-mast;  
And there they did stand, boys, and quiver and shake,  
For fear those French dogs their lives should take

—as a ballad-monger sang.

Benbow himself, the son of a farmer and the nephew of a captain first in the Parliamentary and later in the King's army, went to sea as a master's mate, not as a seaman before the mast, and was himself a thorough sailor. Shadwell's third specimen is the man who, like Benbow, has gone to sea young to learn his business but has kept his manners: and it is he whom Shadwell makes his hero.

Thus there was no single type of sea officer at this period. One

writer, Ned Ward, of a little earlier date than Shadwell, lays emphasis only on the 'society' type. Ward is neither novelist nor historian. He is a pamphleteer and satirist, a sort of literary Cruickshank of his day whose purpose it is to paint all whom he does not like in the most ugly colours. In 1707 he published *The Wooden World dissected in the Character of a Ship of War*, in which he vilifies every naval officer from the captain to the midshipman, keeping such good words as he has to bestow for the seaman before the mast. Though he admits that 'we have some Captains in the navy as much the glory of our Isle as are the Ships they command', who 'give daily proofs of their courage, affability, generosity, justice and probity', he says they are as much the exception as the Ass of Balaam was to the ordinary Ass. The great majority are bad: the typical captain he depicts as a purse-proud ignorant man, possibly a gentleman by birth but utterly lacking in education. Without courage himself, he will employ men on most hazardous enterprises without sharing them. His twin desires are money and liquor; he prefers capturing merchant ships to engaging the enemy's men-of-war in battle; he cheats the seamen of their pay, despises his officers, hates the merchant captains. He is, in short, a most unpleasant and inefficient person. If he had been, as Ward pretends, the representative of the greater part of the captains of the navy, it is impossible to imagine that the navy could have held its own against the capably commanded ships of France. His lieutenant is no better than he and awaits only the time when he may step into his shoes.

The rough seaman or brutal bully type thus described by Ward in 1707 is again to the fore a generation later in Smollett's *Roderick Random* (1748) and *Peregrine Pickle* (1751). Smollett had seen the Navy himself, serving as a surgeon's mate, or 'loblolly boy', in the expedition to Cartagena in 1741. Like Shadwell he shows more than one type. Shadwell's 'Flip' is represented by Commodore Hawser Trunnion, though a little more mildly: for the Commodore is more than a little mad. But he talks much the same language as Flip. Like him, he has risen from the ranks, and boasts of it in words almost the same as his. 'I was none of your Guinea-pigs [the term "guinea-pig" recurs more than once in contemporary Wappingese]; I did not rise in the service by parliamenteering interest, or a handsome bitch of a wife. I was not hoisted over the bellies of better men nor strutted

athwart the quarter-deck in a laced doublet and thingumbobs at the wrists. Damn my limbs! I have been a hard-working man [and here he repeats Flip], and served all offices on board from cook's shifter to the command of a vessel.' But for all this outward roughness and bluster Trunnion is really a simple creature. He supports two of his old shipmates, Lieutenant Hatchway and Boatswain Pipes, both of whom are alive to his weaknesses. Like Flip, the Commodore cannot be imagined in a high or responsible position—a seat on the Admiralty Board, the command of a fleet, the conduct of negotiations with a foreign court. He could be neither an administrator like Anson, his contemporary, nor a strategist or tactician like Jervis or Nelson, nor a strategist and administrator like Barham. But one can picture him as, possibly, a hard-fighting captain who knows how to handle his ship; though his brag about his own exploits may induce doubts. 'Lord have mercy upon us!' says the landlord of his inn, 'he has been a great warrior in his time, and has lost an eye and a heel in the service—Then, he does not live like any other Christian land-man; but keeps garrison in his house, as if he were in the midst of his enemies, and makes his servants turn out in the night, watch and watch (as he calls it) all the year round.' His house is surrounded by a ditch, with a drawbridge; in the courtyard are several small cannon, always loaded. His talk may well have impressed the landlord, but would be received with contempt by any discerning person. 'I lay along-side the Floor de Louse, yard-arm and yard-arm, plying our great guns and small arms, and heaving the stink-pots, powder-bottles, and hand-grenades, till our shot was all expended, double-headed, partridge and grape: then we loaded with iron crows, marlin spikes, and old nails' till the Frenchman sheered off, 'leaving us like a log upon the water, and our scuppers running with blood.' All of which, as the lieutenant and the boatswain were well aware, was pure Munchausen.

Another Smollett character is more likeable. He appears as Lieutenant Tom Bowling, uncle to Roderick Random. He is as brave as he is simple, kind hearted, and generous. 'Know lieutenant Bowling?' says a seaman, 'That I do; and a good seaman he is, as ever stepped upon forecastle,—and a brave fellow as ever cracked a bisket;—none of your Guinea pigs; nor your fresh-water wishy washy, fair-weather fowls.' Tom Bowling is

the model on whom the character of the 'British Tar' of Dibdin and Cook is built—with later, and theatrical, additions.

In contrast to the open-hearted seaman Smollett adds the bully and the brute in the person of Captain Oakum, an arbitrary and despicable tyrant of a repulsive character. When the surgeon brings him the list of sick men he exclaims with an oath 'Sixty one sick people on board of my ship!—Harkée you, sir, . . . I say, there shall be no sick in this ship while I have the command of her.' He orders the surgeon to send all at once to their duty and, when he protests, calls him an insolent scoundrel and threatens him with punishment. He brings a sycophantic surgeon with him who, to gain favour, carries out Oakum's order, with the result that many die. Oakum appears to be one of those who came to sea early and in whom an innate brutality had not been corrected by experience or education.

At the other extreme Smollett repeats Congreve with a 'fop' captain. He is a young man who has reached command through 'Parliamenteering' interest, is ignorant of the sea, dresses daintily in silks, satins, and cambric, wears a mask to protect his face from sunburn, and, like Mizen, scents his cabin. It will have been a man something of this type to whom Admiral Vernon, a blunt outspoken old seaman, remarked that he 'took him for a dancing master'. It seems impossible that such a picture should not be a caricature, but no less impossible that there should not have been some substance in it.

In general, then, Smollett does not give us an engaging picture of the naval officer of his day. But Smollett is writing a novel, not history. His characters must be made to stand out. And his experience was a limited one, coloured by prejudice. In the very subordinate position he occupied he had no opportunity of making a personal acquaintance with the senior officers, or, as Sir John Laughton remarks in his biography in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, of knowing 'anything beyond what he could actually see on the rare occasions when he was permitted to be on the poop'. It can hardly be doubted, too, that prejudice played a part in his outlook. As an educated man he must have smarted at the indignities to which he was subject: for the surgeon of those days was looked down upon by the deck officer, he was ill paid, badly berthed, his value unrecognized—what the lack of medical knowledge cost the Navy may be appreciated from the fact that,

in the Seven Years War, out of 185,000 men raised for the sea service no less than 130,000 died from disease. The standing of the surgeon was lower than that of the most junior lieutenant and little higher than that of the boatswain. So it is not difficult to imagine that resentment put gall into Smollett's pen. But for all that it is indisputable that the conditions he described were not fiction but terrible fact.

The novelists and writers who were Smollett's contemporaries or who came after him—Sterne, Richardson, and Goldsmith among them—do not include sea officers in their galleries: and Dr. Johnson expressed a poor opinion of the sea as a profession. 'No man will be a sailor who has contrivance enough to get himself into a jail, for being in a ship is being in a jail, with the chance of being drowned.' For all that the doctor seems to have had some regard for fighting men. In a conversation in 1778 he remarked: 'Every man thinks meanly of himself for not having been a soldier or not having been at sea.' To Boswell's comment that 'Lord Mansfield did not' Johnson retorted: 'Sir, if Lord Mansfield were in a company of General Officers and Admirals who have been in service, he would shrink; he'd wish to creep under the table.' Though he regarded the happiness of sailors as the happiness of brutes 'with a piece of fresh meat, with the grossest sensuality', he agreed that the fighting professions had 'the dignity of danger': but to the remark that people were to be found who were fond of being sailors he replied, 'I cannot account for that, any more than I can account for other strange perversions of the imagination.' But Johnson had seen little of seamen and ships—he once spent less than a week on board a man-of-war as a guest of the captain. What little he saw disgusted him, both in the language he heard and the want of respect with which he was treated.

The uncouth side of the naval man which impressed Johnson so badly seems also to have been that side which came principally to the notice of his friend, Fanny Burney. *Evelina*, published in 1778, is a broad comedy of manners, and the authoress's object, in her own words, was 'to draw characters from nature, though not from life, and to mark the manners of the times'. The manners of the naval officer of the times she illustrates in the person of Captain Mirvan. He is a narrow-minded buffoon, with the sense of humour of a fourth-form schoolboy of inferior upbringing. He has a fixed prejudice against everything that is

not English. When an elderly French lady comes to stay with the family he loses no opportunity to be vulgarly offensive to her, making rude jokes and playing rough tricks upon her. When, on one occasion, she has lost her way in London, Captain Mirvan cries, 'Who wants you? Do you suppose Madam French, we have not enough of other nations to pick our pockets already?' He threatens her with 'tripping you out of the window'. He takes every possible occasion to utter sarcasms against the French. When it rains, he will not even have the common politeness of giving up a seat inside the carriage to the old lady. 'Oh! Never mind the old beldame,' he says, 'she's weather proof.' And when she returns home, wet through, he bursts into a loud laugh at her distress, though all the rest of the company express concern. Nor is it only towards the elderly Frenchwoman that he behaves in this unmannerly fashion: he makes offensive personal remarks about the young ladies of the company, makes jokes about the bad shape of Maria's nose and calls her a 'tall ill-formed body'.

Curiously enough, Captain Mirvan is not one of those officers who have risen from the ranks. He belongs to the same middle-class family to which Fanny Burney herself belonged. One may suppose him to represent a man of about thirty years of age who would therefore probably have served in the Seven Years War and in the war which then, in 1779, was in progress. He had caught all the rough manners of the seaman without acquiring the manners of an officer or preserving those of a gentleman.

Had she seen such a man? It appears that she had, for, after writing the book, she defends her representation as correct. In her diary of 1780 she wrote: 'The more I see of sea-captains the less reason have I to be ashamed of Captain Mirvan. . . . They have all so irresistible a propensity to wanton mischief, to roasting beaux and detesting old women.' So, she said, she was glad she had not softened his character. Thus it is plain that she had met many naval officers and that it was from her impressions of them that she drew this unattractive character. Yet she had a brother in the Navy who seems in no way whatever to conform to the type of his sister's captain. This brother, afterwards Admiral Burney, was a comrade of Captain Cook, an explorer, a writer, a scholar, a Fellow of the Royal Society, a friend of Charles Lamb and a member of a cultivated circle, who, 'with flashes of wild wit', enlivens his conversation and whose manners are kindly and

delightful, winning the affection of even Doctor Johnson himself. And Fanny herself describes him as 'honest, generous, sensible, unpolished but always unwilling to take offence yet always eager to resent it, very careless and possessed of an uncommon share of good nature: full of humour, mirth and jolity.' There is little in this, except perhaps the word 'unpolished', to establish Captain Mirvan as a type of the naval officer of the day.

Jane Austen draws a more pleasing picture. She, too, had seen the naval officer at close hand, for she had two brothers in the Navy. Writing thirty-three years after Fanny Burney she introduces one into *Mansfield Park* whom, it may be legitimate to guess, she drew from one of them. Her William Price has been seven years at sea and has seen 'every variety of danger, which sea and war together could offer'. His talk is modest and intelligent, he shows himself imbued with 'good principles, professional knowledge, energy, courage, and cheerfulness—every thing that could deserve or promise well'. His talks of shipwrecks and adventure make one of his young friends wish that he too, instead of spending an idle life in his village, had been at sea and seen and suffered so much. 'The glory of heroism, of usefulness, of exertion, of endurance, made his own habits of selfish indulgence appear in shameful contrast.' Clearly this is a different sort of man from Commodore Trunnion. The hardships of sea life are no less than they had been two generations earlier, but some influences of refinement have come into it. Neither William Price nor Captain Wentworth with his 'charming manners, no shyness or reserve' would either have bragged like Trunnion or played schoolboy tricks upon a French lady like Mirvan.

The Navy, however, is not yet a service which receives universal approval. The naval profession is described by one of her characters as 'if possible more distinguished for its domestic virtues than for its national importance'—domestic virtues are not prominent in Captain Mirvan. Another of her characters, a pompous knight, is made to say: 'The profession has its utility but I should be sorry to see any friend of mine in it.' This old snob is offended by the fact that the Navy offered a career to men of obscure birth, who rose to honours of which their fathers and grandfathers never dreamed. Sir Thomas Bertram's brother-in-law is a lieutenant of marines 'without education, fortune or connexions': Sir Thomas's interest could not be extended to so lowly a being; his



profession and standing were 'such as no interest could reach', and the two sisters, in consequence, were permanently kept apart. Jane Austen makes fun of this snobbishness: she satirizes another character, the daughter of an Admiral, who confines her acquaintances to Flag officers and cannot descend to know such inferior creatures as Captains or lower ranks. 'Do you know anything of my cousin's captain, Captain Marshall?' asks Edmund Bertram, 'you have a large acquaintance in the navy, I conclude.' 'Among Admirals, large enough;' answers Miss Crawford: but, 'with an air of grandeur', she adds, 'We know very little of the inferior ranks. Post Captains may be very good sort of men, but they do not belong to *us*.' And when Edmund protests that the Navy is a noble profession, Mary Crawford haughtily answers: 'Yes, the profession is well enough under two circumstances; if it make the fortune, and there be discretion in spending it. But in short it is not a favourite profession of mine. It has never worn an amiable form to *me*.'

All this was written in 1814, when England had been at war for over twenty years and the fate of the country had rested upon the Navy. Except for the references to William Price's seven years at sea 'in every variety of danger, which sea and war together could offer', the war does not reach the village circles. Sir Thomas Bertram makes a trip of some months to inspect his properties in the West Indies, and except for a mention of 'the alarm of a French privateer' on his return voyage from Antigua, there might have been no great war in progress, and little or no importance attached to the Navy or its officers.

The sea officer figures very slightly in a few other books after Jane Austen, until the coming of Captain Marryat in the thirties of the new century. Such books as these add little to our pictures of naval officers: some are fanciful, some are of adventure, some of reminiscence. Then came Marryat. He stands in a class by himself as the delineator of the naval officer. While writers hitherto have only been able to draw upon limited sources, and a comparatively small number of acquaintances, Marryat, in his many years at sea—he went to sea in 1806 and retired in 1830—had a vast range of characters to draw upon, and therefore we get a picture which illustrates the variety of type—a variety which had been recorded a century earlier by Shadwell, with his three characters, and still exists. There are still brutes, but the

emphasis is laid less upon them than upon the better types: and the humour is more kindly.

*Frank Mildmay*, Marryat's second book, published in 1829, is largely autobiographical so far as it relates to the early part of his hero's career. 'Hero' is perhaps hardly the word for an unpleasant boy and young man, and Marryat does not gloss over his imperfections. His behaviour when he first returns from sea is not very unlike that of Ben Legend. 'My *sea* manners were not congenial to the drawing room. My oaths and treatment of the servants, male and female, all conspired to reconcile the whole family to my departure.'

Marryat's captains range from the bully and liar at one end of the scale to the cultivated man and accomplished seaman at the other. There is the captain 'with a lack lustre eye, a pair of thick lips and a very unmeaning countenance, who when exercises aloft were in progress would bellow and foam at the mouth like a mad bull, up and down the quarterdeck.' There is 'Lord Edward', an aristocrat who, though a thorough seaman and good officer, apes the lower deck in his clothes and address. In contrast to both of these is another. 'My next captain was a very different sort of man, refined in his manner, a scholar and a gentleman. Kind and friendly with his officers, his library was at their disposal: the fore cabin, where his books were usually kept, was open to all: it was the schoolroom of the young midshipmen, and the study of the old ones. He was an excellent draughtsman and I profited not a little from his instructions.' Another, whose original was Marryat's first captain, Lord Cochrane, 'was a sailor every inch of him. He knew a ship from stem to stern, understood the character of seamen and gained their confidence. He was besides a good mechanic, a carpenter, rope-maker, sail-maker and cooper. He could hand reef and steer, knot and splice: but he was no orator. He was good tempered, honest and unsophisticated with a large proportion of common sense and free with his officers.' Cochrane had had the advantage of going to sea late, with a better education than that of many of those who, going to sea at an early and impressionable age, came under the influence of the more brutal elements with which they were in contact.

Widely different types are shown in the characters of Captain Kearney, Captain To, Captain 'G', and Captain Capperbar. The first of these is a good-tempered creature but an incorrigible liar,

who dies with a falsehood on his lips. There is no actual harm in him, he treats his officers and men well: but he is as possessed with the spirit of embroidering the truth as Commodore Trunnion, though he does it in a more polite fashion. The second is a greedy creature whose whole outlook is coloured by his love of pork. The third—Captain ‘G’—is a bullying martinet, foul-mouthed and sadistic, a coward and a liar—not a mere amusing romancer like Kearney but a base and cruel liar. But Marryat makes it plain that this was not a representative case. ‘Such a character as Captain G. was rarely met with in the Navy then, and will be still more rare in the future.’ That such a man should have been able to reach the rank of Captain was due, Marryat says, to the shortage of officers in the early stages of the war with France, whereby men from before the mast were advanced to the quarter-deck. Such men, he says, were unfitted, by their lack of education, to their stations. The fourth of this set of captains, Captain Capperbar, is an unblushing thief, who appropriates naval stores to his own personal use to build and furnish his house ashore.

Good and bad, brutes and gentlemen, Marryat’s gallery is drawn from life, with, it may be assumed, some licence. Lord Cochrane is represented in *Peter Simple* by Captain Savage, and in *The King’s Own* by ‘Captain M’. Mr. Midshipman Easy was a Keppel, the eighth son of the fourth Lord Albemarle and brother to a great naval character of the nineteenth century, Admiral Sir Harry Keppel. The triangular duel was an actual event. When Keppel, having married young and being unable to live on his pay, retired from the navy, he went up to Downing College, Cambridge, afterwards taking orders.<sup>1</sup> Of other characters Sir John Laughton wrote ‘there can be little doubt that Marryat’s contemporaries could have fitted other names to Captain Kearney, or to Captain To, or to Lieutenant Oxbelly, and that Mr. Chucks the boatswain was still known in the flesh to the generation that succeeded Marryat’.

In *Percival Keene* Marryat gives sketches of the Captain and officers of a ship—the *Calliope*. The captain is the son of a peer who ‘wrapped himself up in etiquette and showed by almost every action and every word that he never forgot his superiority of birth’: but as to his qualities as an officer and a seaman ‘I shall

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 15 Sept. 1936. The college admission books show his entry on 4 May 1833. He graduated as senior optime in 1836.

only say, they were considered as more than respectable'. The first lieutenant was a thorough seaman, with the appearance of a warrant officer and 'really, for a first lieutenant, a very good natured man': wrapped up in his duties, he was a 'ship-husband' who rarely put his foot ashore. The second and third lieutenants were 'young men of good quality, both good seamen and kind to their inferiors'. The purser was a 'nasty, earwiggling, slattering, boring old rogue'—pursers always fare badly in Marryat's hands. The marine officer was a nonentity and the surgeon a finicking sort of person as to dress, but well informed and perfectly acquainted with his profession. The midshipmen were 'most of them young men of good birth' with the exception of two, one the son of a warrant officer, the other, of a London bootmaker. Socially, it was thus a mixed community: but they are shown as hitting it off in good fellowship. Herein is probably a very average set of officers of the time.

Marryat does not make his seamen talk vulgarly, with a few exceptions. They speak a good round English with a touch of dialect—'sartainly' for 'certainly', for example. But he introduces one, an ex-swell mobsman of a purser's steward, by name Easthupp—one of the principals in the triangular duel—who throws about his h's and misplaces his v's and w's as freely as Sam Weller. 'Yes, Mr. Heasy, quite as good a gentleman as yourself, although I ave ad misfortunes—I ham of as hold a family as hany in the country: many a year did I valk Bond Street, and I ave as good blood in my weins as you, Mr. Heasy, halthoug I have been misfortunate—I've had hadmirals in my family.' But this wretch is unique. Other men, the coxswains Bob Cross and Swinburne, talk correctly and give good advice to the young officers. One, under sentence of death for mutiny, is made to speak thus to Frank Mildmay: 'And now, Sir, let me give you a piece of advice. When you are a captain, as I am very sure you will be, do not worry your men into mutiny by making what is called a smart ship. Cleanliness and good order are what seamen like; but niggling, polishing, scraping iron bars and ringbolts and the like of that, a sailor dislikes more than a flogging at the gangway.' Also, 'Depend upon it, Sir, that nothing is well done that is done in a hurry'. So we can see that what to-day is called 'Spit and polish' existed in Marryat's day and was as much disliked by the good men as it is now.

Marryat tells us that he did not write merely to amuse or to make his readers laugh. He had the higher aim of pointing out 'errors which have existed, and still do exist, in a service which is an honour to its country'. And he claimed that his writings were not without their influence in introducing reforms. Further, 'they have held up in their characters a mirror, in which those in error may see their own deformity, and many which have been given have afterwards returned to the thoughts of those who have had influence, and have been considered as their own ideas, and have been acted upon'—no uncommon experience of the would-be reformer. His novels were a channel of attack upon brutality in all its forms, from the captain on the poop to the midshipman in his berth where the level was 'the level of a Savage'. 'The discipline of public schools', he remarks, 'bad and demoralising as it is, was light compared with the tyranny of a midshipman's berth in 1803.' The indignation which impelled him to combat these evils in his novels found its vent, later on, to advocate the abolition of impressment with all its injustices, and its substitution by a juster, and more efficient method of recruitment for the Navy. But as Defoe, working in the same cause a century earlier, was ahead of his time, so Marryat was ahead of his: and it was not until after the Russian War of 1854-5, with its disgraceful exhibition in manning the fleet, that reforms were introduced.

One point of interest, illustrating the life of the Navy and the upbringing of the young officer in Marryat's day, is the friendship between him and the seaman. The boy, going to sea young, had everything to learn, and though there were captains like him who turned his fore cabin into a schoolroom and library, it was from the older seamen that the youngster learned his practical work, how to handle men, and to understand the outlook of the seaman. In Marryat we see the midshipman and coxswain in friendly talk, the coxswain giving out the lessons of his experience. There is a note of real friendship which bridges over the dividing line of officer and seaman. William Morris once observed that 'when a man is not thinking about himself, he is himself'. In these talks which Marryat puts into the mouth of the seamen, he is throughout telling the young officer to be himself: not to ape some one else but to be honest with himself and to understand the feelings of those whom he will have to command. Croker,

when secretary of the Navy, gave the following advice to a young captain on taking up his first command:

At the Admiralty we consider that much punishment is a proof that the Captain does not understand the true discipline of the Service. You will succeed to the command of a well-disciplined and orderly ship: you must endeavour to keep her to it: an increase in punishment will convince us that you do not know how to manage a ship's company. Moderation towards your men, good humour with your officers and a command over yourself are the three essentials towards your being a respectable officer.

Though it can hardly be from reading Marryat that Croker held these views—since he resigned the secretaryship in November 1829, the year in which the first of Marryat's books appeared—the sentiment is pure Marryat; and the expression may be held to show that he was not the only naval officer to hold these views.

It was less Marryat's sombre and reforming spirit that gave his books their lasting appeal to the public than the spirit of boisterous good humour, comedy, and adventure. These made them effective recruiting agencies for a century and one of our stoutest opponents at sea in the war of 1914–18, Admiral Hipper, an inland German, was attracted to the sea by reading Marryat's novels. He had wished to go to sea, but his mother had opposed it. She argued with him in vain.

Then, in her despair a bright idea struck her. . . . She procured Marryat's stories for her sea-struck offspring in the hope that acquaintance with so much that is strange and awful and terrifying to the mere land-lubber might make him change his mind. . . . The result was the exact opposite of what she anticipated. The boy sat over the books with flaming cheeks, drinking in their contents and daily growing more and more convinced that he had no further ties to bind him to the monotony of life on shore, that he was born and destined for the sea and would never find happiness save on the great oceans.<sup>1</sup>

Hipper was not alone among foreigners in being inspired by Marryat. It was from the reading of his novels that Conrad developed a love for the sea. 'His novels', he wrote, 'are not the outcome of his art, but of his character. . . . Marryat is really a writer of the Service. What sets him apart is his fidelity. His pen serves his country as well as did his professional skill and his renowned courage. His figures move between water and sky,

<sup>1</sup> *Admiral von Hipper*, Captain von Waldeyer-Hartz, G. I. N.

and the water and sky are there only to frame the deeds of the Service.'

No successor of any weight followed Marryat as a delineator of the contemporary naval officer. One sea officer, Captain Chamier, produced a number of naval novels, humble relatives to those of Marryat—*The Life of a Sailor*, *Ben Brace*, *The Arethusa*, *Jack Adams*, and *Tom Bowline*—which had their vogue for a while: but none touch Marryat for characterization, or give pictures from which we learn something of the types of the day. The naval officer makes little or no appearance in the works of the great novelists—Thackeray, Dickens, Trollope, Disraeli. Either the seaman figured so little in the circles in which they moved, or those peculiarities which distinguished Commodore Trunnion, Ben Legend, Captain Mirvan, and others from their fellow men no longer existed, or were too slight to be worth remark.

The two German wars of our own time have produced books, partly of fiction, partly of personal reminiscence, which give pictures of the modern naval officer. 'Bartimeus' and 'Tafrail' gave many sketches of naval characters in their writings during and after the War of 1914–18. In the present war, during which the expansion of the Navy has been even greater than it was in the first German war, and in which both the commissioned ranks and the lower deck have been enriched with able observers and capable writers, many a picture of modern naval life and character has been produced. From these, future generations will be able to form their opinions as to the extent by which the naval officer differs from his civilian brother: and whether such varieties of type as Captain 'G' and Captain Savage are still to be found in the Navy.

H. W. RICHMOND

## THE HISTORY OF TOTAL WAR

**B**EFORE the historian can deliver a considered judgement on the events of war he must be able to see what happened on each side of the hill, be able to compare the facts with the guesses of the rival commanders and of their Governments, and must know the reasons which influenced the contending Governments and commanders in determining their policy and making their decisions. As the defeated side is usually slow in publishing its material, it normally takes longer to compile accounts of war which can claim fairly to be history than it does to write the history of an internal constitutional crisis or of an internal political movement.

We cannot yet claim to have completed satisfactorily the history of the wars of classical times since the available material has come down to us almost entirely from one of the contending sides, and the accounts which we have are concerned mainly with the stories of battles and give us little information as to the conditions which influenced strategy, how the armies were supplied, and what were the conditions of their communications. We are therefore still driven to fill gaps with conjecture. While there is little hope, now, of the discovery of documents to fill these gaps, there is still the possibility that archaeology may provide us with valuable information and that we may yet learn something of the organization of the armies of Darius and Xerxes and of the methods by which their communications were maintained. These conquerors, like most of their successors, were defeated as much by distance as by the valour of their enemies.

The historian of modern war is confronted with a very different problem. As communications and transport improved, the size of armies increased and military operations became more and more complex. Until the eighteenth century, except where great areas were overrun by mass migrations, only that part of the population which lived within the sphere of operations was seriously affected by war; the rest continued to live a more or less normal existence. It happened that as the size of armies increased and the peoples of nations at war became more affected by, and therefore more interested in, its events, simultaneously



the reading public grew and the demand for information as to what really happened increased. With the development of the nation in arms, in which every family makes a direct contribution to the waging of the war, this demand for information has produced a flood of personal experiences, while many of the protagonists either are persuaded by publishers to tell the story of their part in the events of the war or themselves become the subjects of biographies. So a vast library of very varied material quickly accumulates. While much of this is of ephemeral interest, there remains a great deal which the historian cannot neglect. To take a few examples, only, from the War of 1914–1918, Mr. Winston Churchill's *World Crisis*, the memoirs of Mr. Lloyd George, of Hindenburg, of Ludendorff, of Lord Grey, and of Clemenceau not only provide valuable information as to the influences which determined events, but give us an insight into the minds of those who directed affairs. While these private and personal contributions to the history of the war have rapidly increased, so also has the amount of official material. The records of Government departments are filed and preserved, and it has become the practice in all the Services to keep records of orders received and issued and to compile diaries of events. This produces another vast mass of material, which must be arranged and catalogued by a staff of experts, who must make it their business to fill the gaps occasioned by the inevitable losses of war by obtaining the stories of survivors. Therefore in untangling the story of events, even on one side of the hill only, the historian of modern war is confronted with a superfluity of material which must be examined and evaluated. Happily the increase in the extent and complexity of war has led to a development which to some extent lightens his task.

From the time of Alexander the Great some generals kept diaries and wrote reports, of which fragments remain, but these were not accessible to most soldiers and the general opinion amongst them was that war was the only school for war. It was the soldiers' business to fight not to write, and histories of war by professionals for professionals were rare. I have long thought that Julius Caesar designed the *De Bello Gallico* to be a guide to pro-consuls who might have to deal with tribes on the frontiers of the Empire. It seems to me that its style and content would have been very different if he had intended it to be a glorification of

his achievement with a political objective. Whether my supposition is correct or not, it was a very long time after Julius Caesar before it occurred to any military leader that an historical account of his experiences would be of value to future generations of soldiers. The *Réveries* of Marshal Saxe, published in 1751, were in their time of real value, despite Carlyle's sneers, but it was Frederick the Great who first inculcated the study of the history of war by professionals and provided material for the purpose. His correspondence and accounts of the wars of the Austrian Succession and of the Seven Years War are diffuse and not well arranged for purposes of study, but the latter became the chief source used by the Prussian General Staff for its history of the Seven Years War, published in 1901, a work which has exercised great influence on military and political thought in Germany.

The beginning of military history by a professional soldier for professional soldiers may be ascribed to Jomini, who in 1806 produced his *Histoire critique et militaire des campagnes de la Révolution*, in 1827 his *Vie politique et militaire de Napoléon*, and in 1830 his *Précis de l'Art de Guerre*. Jomini's lead was followed by St. Cyr, Desaix, and the Archduke Charles, who in 1814 published his history of the campaign of 1796. Napoleon, like Frederick the Great, insisted on the importance of the professional study of military history, but his own contributions were limited to his correspondence with his generals and to a few military papers such as his appreciation of the position of the armies of the Republic on the frontiers of Italy in 1796.

Napoleon's campaigns produced a flood of military memoirs and increased greatly both the public and professional interest in the history of war. Indeed, from this time the professional study of war may be said to have become definitely established as part of the equipment of the good soldier. Generally speaking, soldiers have not been distinguished as historians and the best work by professionals has been studies of the nature and development of war, based on the work of historians. Of these Clausewitz's *Vom Kriege* is the outstanding example; his one attempt at military history, that of the campaign of 1813, is not of particular value.

From the time of the Wars of the French Revolution military colleges multiplied and the demand for material for the systematic study of war grew and was met by a large number of contributions of varying value. Wellington's dispatches are of real value, but

Napier was our first professional military historian. The first volume of his history of the Peninsular War was published in 1825 and the last in 1840. His judgements were coloured by his political sympathies and he omitted to provide the detailed information which the historian needs, but his work is a good example of the value of an account written by one who was in close touch with the events which he describes, and was strongly moved by them. Only one who was so moved could have given us such glorious passages of descriptive prose as those which tell of the attack of the Fusiliers at Albuera and of the escape of Norman Ramsay's guns at Fuentes Onoro. Oman's history of the same war (begun in 1902 and finished in 1930) is far more correct and detailed, but it, necessarily, lacks the red blood which runs through Napier. Accounts written by those who have been in immediate touch with events, while they cannot be more than steps on the road to history, have real value and are to be encouraged.

The demand for material for the professional study of war led in the fifties of the nineteenth century to the creation of military historical departments in the general staffs of Prussia, Austria, and France. The first work of importance which these produced dealt with the war in Italy of 1859. Of these conspicuously the best was the Prussian, which was compiled by von Moltke. Prussia, Austria, and Bavaria produced official accounts of the war of 1866, but it was the appearance of the German official history of the war of 1870-1 which gave official military history its vogue. This work, which began to appear in 1874 and was completed in ten volumes in 1881, exercised great influence on military thought, particularly in this country, but before the last volumes were published criticisms by German military writers made it clear that all that the official history said, even of the operations of the German armies, was not gospel. When in 1901 the French official history began to appear under the title *La Guerre de 1870-71* it was seen that the operations of the German armies had not been conducted as perfectly as their official history would have it seem. The French official history was completed in 1913 in fifty-four volumes, and a study of this work produced the impression that the object of the compilers of the German official history had been rather to promote the greater glory of the new Reich and to make the leaders appear as demi-gods than to inculcate valuable military lessons. In fact, the German General

Staff did not rely upon its history for the latter purpose; instruction was provided by means of *Einzelschritten*, detailed studies of particular phases of the war, compiled by selected officers brought in temporarily to the military historical department for the purpose, and by tactical studies such as those compiled by von Moltke.

We followed the example of Germany and produced official accounts of our campaigns, which were at first prepared in the Intelligence Department of the War Office. But when the Committee of Imperial Defence was well established it was wisely decided that war was not the business of one department of State but the concern of the nation as a whole and an historical section of the Committee of Imperial Defence was set up, charged with the collection and cataloguing of official material and the preparation of histories of war. The history of the South African War therefore appeared under the auspices of His Majesty's Government.

The military historical departments did not confine themselves to accounts of operations in which their own armies had taken part; the German general staffs produced accounts of the American Civil War and of the South African War amongst others, and an account of the Russo-Japanese War was one of the early works which came from the Committee of Imperial Defence. The function of these departments was to produce material which would be of value for professional study, wherever it was to be found. The establishment of these departments is obviously of the greatest value to historians as it gives them easier and quicker access to official material than would otherwise be available, since the machinery of these departments works more quickly than that of record offices, and they provide the historian with the best maps and most expert advice when he needs it.

Such was the general development of official military history at the time of the outbreak of the War of 1914-18. During the war the collection of documents was taken in hand and the compilation of histories was begun soon after the cessation of hostilities. The first volume of the naval history, which was a survey of the naval situation at the outbreak of war, appeared in 1920, the first volume of the military history, *Military Operations: France and Belgium*, appeared in 1922, and the first volume of the air history in the same year. The histories of our several

campaigns by land, sea, and air and the histories of the administrative and auxiliary services at present amount to sixty-six volumes, and the military history of the war in France and Belgium is not yet complete. While it is true that the outbreak of the present war has been responsible for this delay, it is unlikely that the work would have been completed in less than twenty-five years after the cessation of hostilities. It seems clear that if we are to deal with the history of the present war in the same way and on the same scale, we must expect the issue of some hundred volumes, spread over a period of about forty years. The compilation of official history is necessarily a slow business, for, being official, the proofs have to be submitted to the chief actors in events, and to a number of government departments, for approval.

Now one of the chief justifications for the expenditure of public money on the preparation of military histories is that these provide the best material for the professional study of war, but what most professionals require is the means of studying tactical developments and the problems of administration and supply. If this material is to be of value it must be supplied reasonably quickly. The development of weapons and of communications during this war have made the lessons of 1940, on these matters, out of date in 1944. If we are to proceed with the history of this war in the same way as we did with that of the last war and begin at the beginning, it seems to be certain that the military lessons, which are the concern of the average professional, will be out of date long before the histories of the campaigns of 1945 have appeared. I have pointed out that after 1870 the German General Staff found means of providing valuable military instruction apart from the official military history, but for the production of this the necessary materials had to be collected and arranged, and this is one of the chief functions of an historical section.

Is there any method by which this time-lag in the preparation of material for instructional purposes can be reduced without hampering the eventual preparation of histories? There is, I think, one which merits consideration. When the Government of the United States was confronted with the problem of dealing with the records of the Civil War, it appeared to be inevitable that the sympathies of any compilers of a history of that war would be, or would be charged with being, either with the North or with the South, and there was danger that such a history would

add fuel to controversies which the Government desired to damp down. Therefore, instead of preparing a history, the Government of the United States collected and published the records of both sides. These were published under the title *The War of the Rebellion—Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. The war ended in 1866, and the first volume of these records appeared in 1881; there were in all 130 volumes, the last volume being published in 1902. The official records of the Union and Confederate navies, which comprised 30 volumes, began to appear in 1894 and were completed in 1927. These records contain almost every relevant document, the Government of the United States being in the unique position of having control of the records of both sides. The records are well arranged, but this immense work is unfortunately provided with a very indifferent index. Nevertheless, it has proved to be a gold mine both to professionals and to historians. The time taken in producing this work does not suggest that here is a means of reducing the time-lag, but in fact there was a long delay before a decision was reached as to policy, and the collection of records is more detailed than is necessary for professional purposes.

The French in preparing their official history of the War of 1914–18 adopted a compromise between our method and that of the United States. Their official history, under the title *Les Armées Françaises dans la grande guerre*, began to appear in 1922, and in 1937 seventy-three volumes had been published. These consist of a brief introductory narrative for each campaign, just sufficiently detailed to enable the student to follow the sequence of events, followed by volumes of the relevant documents, orders, and maps. The narrative is not satisfactory because the compilers did not avail themselves of the information, which was at their disposal, as to the operations of our armies, and in this it is often incorrect and incomplete, but the selection and arrangement of documents has been well done.

The question is whether by improving on the American and French methods we could not produce a record of the present war which would be in time to be of value for professional purposes and be equally valuable to the historian. It would not be necessary for either purpose to publish documents in such detail as in the American records of the Civil War. It would be advisable, I suggest, to consider the circumstances of each campaign and to

put a limit on the documents to be included. This might normally be confined to the orders and other relevant documents of divisions with a corresponding limit for naval and air documents, the regimental records being left to the compilers of regimental histories, for which every assistance should be given, for these are not only valuable in promoting *esprit de corps*, but they provide detail and human interest for which there is no room in the histories. A method of this kind would have the advantage that a strict chronological order would be unnecessary and a beginning might be made with the publication of the documents of those phases of the war the lessons of which would seem to have the greatest professional value.

There is a further consideration which merits attention. Is it desirable to attempt to compile separate histories for each service as we have done in the past? To-day the whole tendency is, happily, to regard the fighting services as a unit co-operating for one purpose, and in most theatres of war the several services operate under one direction. Further, the dependence of the fighting services on production and supply is greater to-day than it has ever been in military history. Would it not then be better to bring together as complete a collection of the relative documents, within such limits as I have suggested, dealing with all matters which affect each campaign, rather than to continue to deal with each service separately?

The official publications confined to records, with a brief explanatory narrative, would have the advantage of not appearing to be what they cannot be—history. Excellent as our official accounts of 1914–18 are, they cannot be history, for Governments are slow in releasing documents relating to the developments of policy, particularly when alliances are in question, and it is normally a long time before complete material is available from the enemy's side, particularly when he has been defeated. I should therefore say that the title 'Official Records' is more satisfactory than 'Official History'.

It seems to me, then, that what we have to consider is how to meet the very natural demand of the public for contemporary accounts of events, how to provide the material for professional study in time to be of service, and how to place the mass of material available conveniently at the disposal of the historian. The first of these needs might be met by giving facilities to

selected authors, as has been done in the preparation of brochures giving accounts of particular operations, and leaving them to handle such material as can be placed at their disposal in their own way, without accepting official responsibility for their opinions. The second and third would be met by careful selection, arrangement, and publication of such of the relevant documents as can be prepared in reasonable time, and by detailed professional studies of particular operations, such as are, I understand, already in preparation.

There is one aspect of this question on which I am not competent to express an opinion, that is the financial. Our official histories of 1914-18 had a considerable sale and it may be that these sales have gone a long way towards meeting the costs of production. It seems certain that there will be little sale for collections of records. On the other hand, the compilation of records should be much less costly than the preparation of narratives. I have not been able to obtain any estimates of the costs of my proposals, and this is certainly a matter on which the Treasury will have views.

F. MAURICE



# THE ART OF BEN JONSON

IT is always interesting to get back to the workshop of a great literary craftsman, especially if he thought long and deeply on his art and left some memorable utterances upon it, as Ben Jonson did. Often these utterances are a reply to critics, and he criticized contemporaries freely himself, sometimes in the form of biting satire. In *Poetaster* he went further and drew full-length caricatures of Marston and Dekker. We have also such striking, *obiter dicta* as the blunt assertion, in a chance talk with William Drummond, that 'Shakespeare wanted art'. It survives as a mere jotting in Drummond's note-book, without the conversation that led up to it or the illustrative examples which Jonson may have furnished, to his own satisfaction if not to Drummond's. We can interpret it now only by conjecture, but oh that Drummond had been a Boswell!

Jonson's only direct criticism of Shakespeare refers to his style, and here we do not depend upon a reporter. It is set down in cold print in the *Discoveries*. 'The players', he says, 'have often mentioned it as an honour to Shakespeare that in his writing (whatsoever he penned) he never blotted out line.' The players were impressed; they often mentioned it. There was something practical in this clear and rapid execution; it was their idea of business efficiency. And then Jonson, we may imagine, hearing this once too often and sensitive about a possible innuendo in it, breaks in with a dry and unsympathetic comment delivered curtly like a stage-aside, 'Would he had blotted a thousand!' He reset the underlying idea in the fine tribute which he prefixed to the First Folio:

Who casts to write a living line must sweat  
                    and strike the second heat  
Upon the Muses' anvil; turn the same  
(And himself with it) that he thinks to frame.

If Shakespeare had chosen to describe the process of poetic composition, would he have thought of it as a hammering on the anvil? It is characteristic of their difference of outlook that Jonson fastens on the image of a cunning smith forging a Toledo blade.

✓ 'The good poet's made, as well as born', he said, defying an old proverb. Let us test him by his own standard and see what he achieved by it. Was he a blind follower of rules? Did he allow for the freedom of the artist? His work covered a wide range: he was playwright and masque-writer, lyric poet and satirist, scholar and critic; and he equipped himself for his many-sided task with an erudition so vast that only two writers of the century—Bacon and Milton—could vie with him. The quarrel of the ancients and the moderns had not begun in his day: it was left for Dryden and his successors. Jonson would have tried to hold the balance.

I know nothing can conduce more to letters than to examine the writings of the ancients, and not to rest in their sole authority, or take all upon trust from them, provided the plagues of judging and pronouncing against them be away. . . . For to all the observations of the ancients we have our own experience; which if we will use and apply, we have better means to pronounce. It is true they opened the gates and made the way that went before us; but as guides, not commanders. . . . Truth lies open to all; it is no man's several.

And in the induction to an early play, *Every Man out of his Humour*, he briefly sketched the growth of ancient comedy from Susarion to Aristophanes and thence to Menander and Plautus, adding significantly that these classic writers were innovators and 'augmented [comedy] with all liberty' according to the standard of the times for which they wrote. He draws a moral from this: 'I see not then but we should enjoy the same licence or free power to illustrate and heighten our invention as they did; and not be tied to those strict and regular forms which the niceness of a few (who are nothing but form) would thrust upon us.' Jonson had honorary degrees at Oxford and Cambridge: he was probably the only working playwright of the period who could have lectured there on the drama, and here is a clear hint of the form which his inaugural lecture would have taken.

(He never allowed mere technique to hamper him.) Sidney, who was his first teacher, had scoffed at playwrights for their failure to observe the unities of place and time. Jonson modified these from the first. (He wrote plays which observed them, but not pedantically or at the cost of probability.) The day of twenty-four hours might on a suitable occasion extend to two days. The characters might sleep a night in the country and return to town

next morning, as they do in *Every Man out of his Humour*; or, when history requires it, there might be a complete change of scene, as in Tiberius' retirement from Rome to Capreae or Catiline's flight to join his army in Tuscany. When the plot admits of a close observance of the unity of place, as in *The Alchemist*, the scene is fixed inside or outside a single house; and Bartholomew Fair is wide (or narrow) enough to include all comers. The licence which he deprecated was to go to improbable lengths in these points. In the fourth act of *The Winter's Tale* the chorus bridges over a gap of sixteen years; such a rough-and-ready device was certainly in Jonson's eyes a want of art, and he did actually criticize in a prologue that other chorus which 'wafts you o'er the seas' in *King Henry the Fifth*. He postulated for his ideal play

deeds and language such as men do use—

not flights of pure romance—

And persons such as Comedy would choose  
When she would show an image of the times  
And sport with human follies, not with crimes.

Plant your foot firmly on mother earth; keep clear of enchanted islands or impossible sea-coasts; let the work be fundamentally comic: not a serious action interspersed with lighter scenes of humorous relief, or tragicomic with a happy ending. Jonson stipulated that Comedy should take 'human follies' for its theme—not freaks of circumstance, misunderstandings, confusions of identity, which were exploited, often brilliantly, by his contemporaries—but eccentricities of character. )✓

Starting from a hint in Sidney, he developed this conception on new lines. The dominant feature of a character was to be 'some one peculiar quality' which

Doth so possess a man that it doth draw  
All his affects, his spirits, and his powers  
In their confluxions *all to run one way*.

It sounds terribly rigid, as if he were saying to himself 'At all costs I will be monotonous', and he unconsciously laid a finger on the weakness of his humour types in defining them so precisely. He forced himself to concentrate upon them at the cost of incident and to make the character-studies extremely hard. There is no light and shade; the cross-play of motives is apt

to be neglected; and, above all, he misses the inconsistency which is so powerful an element in the nature of us all. His portraits are firmly and clearly drawn, but they lack warmth and the soft play of life.

He was fond of taking his audience into his confidence about his literary aims and motives; one wonders whether these explanations bored or amused the playgoer, but at least they are illuminating to us. In the last of his humour studies, *The Magnetic Lady or Humours Reconciled*, produced in October 1632, he made this frank avowal in a rapid survey of his dramatic achievement: 'The author, beginning his studies of this kind with *Every Man in his Humour* and, after, *Every Man out of his Humour*, and since continuing in all his plays, especially those of the comic thread, . . . some recent humours still or manners of men that went along with the times; finding himself now near the close or shutting up of his circle, hath fancied to himself in idea this *Magnetic Mistress*'; this lady and a marriageable niece 'he makes his centre attractive to draw thither a diversity of guests, all persons of different humours, to make up his perimeter. And this he hath called *Humours Reconciled*'.

The 'centre attractive' is needed to bring the humours into action, and in this play it is very ingeniously contrived. But it is a frank admission by the author that some machinery is needed to bring about the effective interplay of character. He had in his early work employed the cunning slave of Plautus, placing him in an English setting and sharply intellectualizing him. In *Every Man in his Humour* Brain-worm, the family servant, outwitting a solid respectable burgess such as the elder Knowell, conforms fairly well to the Plautine type, but he improves on his model, and he is a shrewd judge of character. As Jonson's art matured, he refined and heightened this deft contriver of the intrigue. Face in *The Alchemist* and Mosca in *Volpone* can match themselves against a fellow-knave or a master and emerge, the one triumphant, and the other ruined only when his superior in villainy falls along with him.

Jonson's outlook on life was always keenly—perhaps we may say, ruthlessly—intellectual. Suppose we put the question, 'Of all the characters of Shakespeare and Jonson, which do you consider most representative of the creator's temper and habit of mind?' I think a fair answer would be 'Falstaff and Volpone'.

Remember Falstaff's shrewd self-criticism: 'I am not only witty in myself, but the cause that wit is in other men.' And for his criticism of others we need go no farther than his comments on the comfortable panic-stricken householders whom he pressed for service in the war, 'Toasts-and-butter, with hearts in their bellies no bigger than pins'-heads', or the shrewd criticism of Shallow's servants, 'They, by observing of him, do bear themselves like foolish justices.' In *Volpone*, on the other hand, the Comic Spirit is crossed with a deep and bitter irony. The insight into human folly takes a sinister turn. After the scene in court where Volpone and Mosca have baffled justice and involved two innocent victims in ruin as the price of their own escape, they sum up the situation as a master-stroke of wit.

Good wits are greatest in extremities,  
says Volpone, and his subordinate replies

It were a folly beyond thought, to trust  
Any grand act unto a cowardly spirit.

The strangest feature of the struggle, adds Volpone, is that the sordid crew of dupes writhing in the mire to get his money

(being so divided 'mongst themselves)  
Should not scent somewhat or in me or thee,  
Or doubt their own side.

*Mosca.* True, they will not see't.  
Too much light blinds 'hem, I think.

The nearest approach to that in Shakespeare is the snake-like character of Iago with his warped and ghastly insight into the characters he is tricking.

Only one humour play of Jonson's dispenses with the instrument of intrigue—*Bartholomew Fair*. There no external machinery is needed to work the puppets and involve them in fiasco. The comic harms come about inevitably as natural incidents of the fair. People of all conditions crowd to it, some to see the sights and some to ply their trades, honest or dishonest—tapsters, gingerbread-sellers, pickpockets, horse-dealers, ballad-singers—and finally a Puritan household, shepherded by a zealot who served later for the model of Stiggins. Their arrival is dramatically postponed till the fair is in full swing in the third act, and they enter to the tune of their leader's nasal snuffle: 'So, walk on the middle way, fore-right; turn neither to the right hand, nor to the left; let not

## THE ART OF BEN JONSON

your eyes be drawn aside with vanity, nor your ear with noises. . . . The place is Smithfield, or the field of smiths, the grove of hobby-horses and trinkets; the wares are the wares of devils, and the whole fair is the shop of Satan.'

In one vital respect Jonson stands out significantly among his fellow-playwrights. Concentrating on humours, he necessarily invented his plots. (With characters more or less determined at the outset, who had to walk like his Puritans in the middle way, turning neither to left nor right, the author was bound to build up a plot which suited them; they could not develop themselves. Jonson picks up stray hints or ideas for separate incidents, but he never borrows more than for a scene. He took hints from Erasmus for *The Alchemist*, and he derived from Boccaccio the fantastic scene in *The Devil is an Ass* in which Wittipol bribes Fitzdottrel with a rich cloak to let him woo Mistress Fitzdottrel before her husband's face.) But Jonson's most remarkable re-setting is in *The Silent Woman*, where the mock duel between the disguised Viola and Sir Andrew in *Twelfth Night* is worked up for a competition in poltroonery between Sir John Daw and Sir Amorous La-Fool. In the hard business of play-writing Jonson found no Holinshed nor Plutarch on whom to levy royal toll. His plots are essentially original.

As we study these plots, some characteristic features reveal themselves. He was far too keen a critic not to know the danger he ran in portraying characters fully formed at the outset. How were they to be made lifelike? And how were they to escape the damning curse of monotony? He hit upon one safeguard at least. From *The Alchemist* onwards—the play in which he depicted with consummate skill the flux and welter of London roguery—he set his scenes openly in London and made his characters English. He is the first of our dramatists to do this systematically. He calls attention to the change in the prologue:

/Our scene is London, 'cause we would make known  
No country's mirth is better than our own.

In this way he brought his characters a step nearer to reality. Not that he ever became a realist in the true sense of that much-abused term. Even in *Bartholomew Fair*, a play which so faithfully depicts the seventeenth-century prototype of a bank holiday that his canvas is splashed with coarseness, he claimed that he had used the artist's power of selection. In the induction he

brings on the stage-keeper grumbling and criticizing: 'When 't comes to the Fair once, you were e'en as good go to Virginia for anything there is of Smithfield. He has not hit the humours, he does not know 'hem; he has not conversed with the Bartholomew birds'—the 'bats', as they liked to call themselves—and some low characters, representative of the actual life of the fair, are specified. 'No, and some writer that I know had had but the penning o' this matter, he would have made you such a jig-a-jog i' the booths, you should ha' thought an earthquake had been i' the Fair.' Jonson's art fought shy of earthquakes.

Even in a play where the poet in him took wings, the pastoral fragment of *The Sad Shepherd*, he kept steadily in view his ideal of a setting true to his native England. It was easy for Theocritus to make his shepherds pipe in the high mountain pastures of Sicily,

On the sward, at the cliff top,  
Lie strewn the white flocks,

with the sea shining below them and the white peak of Etna brooding in the distance. But the English shepherd is not idyllic, and still less is he dramatic. Yet Jonson caught the pastoral note in his opening lines:

Here she was wont to go, and here, and here,  
Just where those daisies, pinks, and violets grow!  
The world may find the spring by following her,  
For other print her airy steps ne'er left;  
Her treading would not bend a blade of grass  
Or shake the downy blow-ball from his stalk.  
But like the soft west wind she shot along,  
And where she went, the flowers took thickest root,  
As she had sow'd them with her odorous foot.

And later in the description of the witch's dingle:

There in the stocks of trees white fays do dwell,  
And span-long elves that dance about a pool.

Throughout there is a sustained lightness of touch, an escape into poetry, which is rare in the dramatic work of Jonson. Of all the Elizabethan conventions the pastoral play was the most artificial. Jonson criticized it in the prologue. It was supposed to keep clear of comedy, avoiding even rustic mirth; it was to be elegiac, 'stamp'd with *Ah* and *Oh*', the whimpering of the love-lorn shepherd. Shakespeare in *As You Like It* had clearly

indicated his sense of the inadequacy of the convention in the by-play of Silvius and Phoebe, and Jonson followed in this late flowering of his genius, which unhappily he left unfinished.

And though he now present you with such wool  
As from mere English flocks his muse can pull,  
He hopes, when it is made up into cloth,  
Not the most curious head here will be loth  
To wear a hood of it; it being a fleece  
To match or those of Sicily or Greece.  
His scene is Sherwood, and his play a Tale  
Of Robin Hood's inviting to the Vale  
Of Be'voir all the shepherds to a feast.

The play is in essentials a picture of Elizabethan country life, and no work of Jonson's is truer to his ideals.

(Jonson gave a fillip to his character-sketches in another way. His bent was towards satire, and it is significant that he took to labelling his early plays—*Every Man out of his Humour*, *Cynthia's Revels*, and *Poetaster*—not comedies, but 'Comical Satires'. He was not a man who used such terms lightly. And when he struck at contemporary follies, affectations or vices, he planted his blows with a well-directed aim. He was deeply read in Horace, Juvenal, and Martial; he had a trenchant and clear-cut style. In *Cynthia's Revels* he drew, very undramatically, a complete gallery of foppish courtiers, hitting off with sharp and subtle strokes every affected and unpleasant type he had found at Whitehall—

a proud and spangled sir  
That looks three handfuls higher than his foretop;

a 'mincing marmoset made all of clothes and face'; a debtor who takes bribes; a 'subtle Proteus' who can 'be anything but honest'; and the follies of courtly love are ruthlessly anatomized. Small wonder that the play failed at Court. \*

In *The Alchemist* this method achieved its crowning triumph. The vulgar alchemist of Jonson's day was a pretender to mysterious knowledge and pure life; he spread his net wide enough to entrap every species of gull. The low shopkeeper and the grandiose speculator, even the Puritan, are caught in the meshes of Jonson's play. (The spectacle of a keen-witted knave holding shrewdly in hand a multitude of dupes appealed to Jonson;) and the portrayal of them also offered him a dramatic



problem which he set himself to solve. (How were the dupes to be differentiated from one another?) Jonson watched such points with unerring vigilance, and the intricate and well-knit plot has perfect freedom of movement. He brings on his characters gradually, and, as Dryden said of *The Silent Woman*, 'he moves afterwards in by-walks, or underplots, as diversions to the main design, lest it should grow tedious, though they are still naturally joined with it and somewhere or other subservient to it. Thus, like a skilful chess-player, by little and little he draws out his men and makes his pawns of use to his greater persons.'

One other marked feature of Jonson's technique calls for notice. He has a trick, as the play is moving towards its catastrophe, of complicating it by some counter-movement and checking the progress of the action. In the chorus at the end of the fourth act of *The Magnetic Lady* Jonson not only admits his use of this device but glories in it. Damplay and Probee, two opposite types of critic, speculate on the probable ending of the play. Damplay, who makes only a feeble effort to live up to his name, says the audience might be spared the vexation of a fifth act, the issue of which any intelligent spectator, who has sat through the play so far, knows already or may in part conjecture. The prompter's boy, a pert youth, gives him enlightenment: 'Stay and see his last act, his catastrophe, how he will perplex that, or spring some fresh cheat, to entertain the spectators with a convenient delight till some unexpected and new encounter break out to rectify all and make good the conclusion.' Perhaps Jonson had been criticized for this fondness for suspense and countercheck at a critical moment of the action: usually with him avowals of this nature are a retort to critics. But the method can be fully tested in *Volpone*, where it is used with masterly skill in the fifth act. Here the arch-impostor in his own words makes a noose for his own neck and runs his head into it wilfully.

It is inevitable in dealing with an artist so conscientious as Jonson, who wrought even the minutest details of his work with scrupulous care, that we should subject him to a severe analysis. There is a danger of doing him injustice by pressing such a method as if he were uniformly rigid and unbending. Some of his limitations are obvious: for instance, in his handling of women-characters. The higher type eluded him. Dol Common in *The Alchemist*, Ursula the pigwoman in *Bartholomew Fair*, and Polish,

the gossip and she-parasite of *The Magnetic Lady*, stand out most vividly among his women; and they are a precious trio to represent their sex. But we may realize something of his skill in portraiture if we glance briefly at one or two of his male characters. Take first Bobadill. The professional swordsman was one of the nuisances of contemporary London. 'There is a humour used of late', says Samuel Rowlands in a lively little brochure,<sup>1</sup>

By every rascal swaggering mate  
To give the stab.

There was even a literature of quarrelling and stabbing which was summarized very neatly by Touchstone; and Mercutio, as he lay dying, raged at the thought of being run through by 'a villain that fights by the book of arithmetic'. Rowlands's 'dissembling soldier' has

slain more men by break of day  
Than could have graves digg'd for them in a week.

Bobadill is great on this mathematical aspect of fencing. Just before he has his nonsense knocked out of him with a cudgel, he propounds a scheme by which he and nineteen other choice spirits chosen by an instinct he has—Falstaff also had an instinct—will in two hundred days kill forty thousand enemies of the Queen in open fight 'civilly by the sword', dispatching them in batches of twenty. His touch is infallible: 'Why, I will learn you, by the true judgement of the eye, hand, and foot, to control any enemy's point i' the world. Should your adversary confront you with a pistol, 'twere nothing by this hand; you should, by the same rule, control his bullet, in a line: except'—and here he faces a real difficulty—'except it were hail-shot and spread. What money ha' you about you, Master Matthew?' That was an even more pressing difficulty, a point less easy to control. And when Matthew has only two shillings, Bobadill says with perfect resignation, 'We will have a bunch of radish and salt, to taste our wine, and a pipe of tobacco to close the orifice of the stomach'. There is in this fire-eater an unfailing submissive-ness to reason. He keeps his valour in a half-light, exhibiting it, as he professes, only to some 'choice and peculiar spirits', so that it escapes challenge and detection. He lives in a mean lodging which scandalizes even his infatuated admirer Matthew: to

<sup>1</sup> *Look to it: for I'll stab ye*, 1604.

Bobadill it is 'a cleanly and quiet privacy, above all the tumult and war of fortune'; There is a pathos in his waking cry, 'A cup o' thy small beer, sweet hostess'; the modern equivalent is the pallid young gentleman who comes down late to breakfast and says he will take a cup of tea and some dry toast. Of a piece with this is Bobadill's affectation of melancholy. Arthur tells Hubert in *King John*

When I was in France,  
Young gentlemen would be as sad as night.  
Only for wantonness.

France' is used here, of course, because of the French setting of the play. English gulls were 'mightily given to melancholy', and Bobadill, when he was beaten and disarmed, had an opportunity to realize what genuine depression meant. Jonson as a youth served in the army in Flanders, challenged a Spaniard to single combat between the lines and killed him; and when criticized for satirizing sham captains, he retorted in an epigram *To True Soldiers*, expressing his respect for 'Your great profession which I once did prove'. He knew the type he was depicting.

There is equal insight in the portrait of Rabbi Zeal-of-the-Land Busy, the Puritan fanatic in *Bartholomew Fair*. At first he is the conventional type of hypocrite, casuist, and glutton, but the unbending fortitude of the Puritan comes out when he is in the stocks for kicking over a gingerbread stall because the gingerbread figures on it were moulded to represent the apostle Bartholomew. 'I am glad to be thus separated from the heathen of the land and put apart in the stocks for the holy cause', and he describes himself as 'one that rejoiceth in his affliction and sitteth here to prophesy the destruction of fairs and may-games, wakes and whitsun ales, and doth sigh and groan for the reformation of these abuses'. That is a faithful picture of the Puritan in defeat and adversity—no caricature like Butler's *Hudibras*—and it is prophetic of the fate of England not long after Jonson was laid to rest in the Abbey.

Or take the situation in *Volpone*, the grim study of the legacy-hunter, violating for once Jonson's own canon of the themes suitable for comedy, which should 'sport with human follies, not with crimes'. He is careful to set the scene in Venice. All the principal characters are hardened criminal types playing

desperately for high stakes. Corbaccio risks his son's inheritance, Corvino his wife's honour. It is an extraordinary situation for a comedy. How would Jonson have justified it? Firstly I think he would have pointed to the characters of Volpone and Mosca, each a supreme artist in villainy, into whom their creator has poured all his own intellectual strength. They had the wit to plan, and the callousness to execute, any devilry. A significant touch is Volpone's contempt for money.

I glory

More in the cunning purchase of my wealth  
Than in the glad possession.

He is no tradesman, ruining others to enrich himself, and he knows how to appreciate and enjoy his treasures. Further, in the dedication of the play to the two universities Jonson pleads that the catastrophe, if not strictly comic, does at least punish vice. The league of two great criminals, master and servant, ends in a deadly struggle between them, a duel of two brilliant gladiators, and the utter ruin of both.

That was a situation which Jonson had depicted once before in a setting better suited to it if he is to be judged by his own standard of the 'laws' that control the drama. It was in comedy that his great work was done. But he made two remarkable ventures into tragedy in *Sejanus* and *Catiline*. It is suggestive that he chose for his subjects two deadly episodes of Roman history—the grim struggle to the death between Tiberius and Sejanus and the conspiracy of the anarchist Catiline. His historical reading for the play of *Sejanus* undoubtedly influenced the plot of *Volpone*. Volpone and Mosca renew in a very different setting the situation of Tiberius and Sejanus.

In the preface to the first edition of *Sejanus* Jonson briefly enumerated the technical points which a writer of tragedy must observe. He begins with an admission: *Sejanus* is 'no true Poem' in that it has not observed 'the strict laws of time', and 'also in the want of a proper Chorus'. He pleads quite reasonably the impossibility of fulfilling these requirements 'in these our times, and to such auditors as commonly things are presented'. When he came to write *Catiline*, he changed his mind about the chorus and closed each act with a series of reflections on the action cast in lyrical form: in dedicating this play to his patron Lord Pembroke he felt justified in calling it 'a legitimate poem'.

But in *Sejanus* he claims to have observed the laws of tragedy in the other vital points—‘truth of argument’—that is to say, a faithful adherence to history—‘dignity of persons, gravity and height of elocution, fulness and frequency of sentence’. He evidently held that he had in essentials observed the spirit of the antique drama even if in a point or two he had departed from the letter of it.

Gifted critic and fine scholar though he was, he is here labouring under a delusion. The points he has observed are superficial: the last two in particular affect only his style and form of expression, and so far they are important. What he did achieve was to copy with real appreciation the sombre pictures of Tacitus and Juvenal, and his most powerful strokes are far more those of the satirist than of the tragedian. The *ὑβρις*, the blind arrogance of Sejanus, and the lightning stroke of his ruin, have certainly an element of tragic power. Here Jonson rises to the greatness of his theme. But the failure is in his portrait of Tiberius. In Tacitus that lonely, brooding figure, self-tortured and hesitating, at moments completely paralysed, is a superb effort of historical portrait-painting. What scope a dramatist had with such a character as this, Jonson might have learnt from the soliloquies of *Hamlet* or even from that opening soliloquy of Brutus in the second act of *Julius Caesar*. The actual soliloquies of Tiberius in *Sejanus* are matter-of-fact, advancing the movement of the plot certainly, but failing to rise to the heights of drama.

Jonson was justified, however, in the claim he put forward about his style. At his best he wrote with a fine combination of lucidity and force. ‘Gravity and height of elocution’ are frequent in the play, and he used ‘gravity’ in the sense of the Latin *gravitas*, a peculiarly Roman quality denoting both weight and dignity. ‘Fulness and frequency of sentence’ is also a Roman tradition. The sentence, or moral maxim expressed with point and brevity, is a legacy of Seneca, and it was popular in Elizabethan writing. Jonson himself supplies examples of it. Suddenly in a lyric we come across such an utterance on life as

The ignoble never lived; they were awhile  
Like swine or other cattle on the earth.

And in a play he could write a great aphoristic line such as  
All may begin a war, but few can end it.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Catiline*, iv. 639.

And he had at times almost a Latin terseness of speech in the wealth of meaning he could pack into less than a dozen words.

Thy forehead is too narrow for my brand

is the single line of withering contempt into which he concentrated his hatred of Inigo Jones.

Indeed the man and his art are all of a piece. A minor poem of *The Underwood* is 'An Epistle answering to one that asked to be Sealed of the Tribe of Ben'. The note that rings through the rather stiff and heavy verse is one of sustained sincerity and manliness. He wrote it at a time when his favour as a court-poet was on the wane, and hence the appeal of his young admirer affected him deeply. He speaks of his resolve to avoid friction at Court: it is a clear sign of advancing age to find the old warrior less combative.

Live to that point I will for which I am man,  
And dwell as in my centre as I can,  
Still looking to and ever loving heaven,  
With reverence using all the gifts thence given;  
'Mongst which if I have any friendships sent  
Such as are square, well-tag'd and permanent, . . .  
These I will honour, love, embrace, and serve.  
. . . First give me faith, who know  
Myself a little; I will take you so  
As you have writ yourself: now stand, and then,  
Sir, you are sealed of the Tribe of Ben.

'Square, well-tag'd and permanent'—the words will serve to describe his writings as effectively as his friendships.

Jonson failed to impose his theories of dramatic art on the contemporary stage. He would have cramped its growth, had he succeeded in doing so. But none the less the ideal which he steadily upheld of balanced, sane, and well-constructed work was sadly lacking in his day. Elizabethan drama is often described as 'lawless' or 'romantic', and the terms so loosely used are held to excuse a multitude of literary sins. Nothing is more obvious than the inequality of most Elizabethan plays. There is an abundance of fine scenes and powerful situations, but—apart from Shakespeare—how many of the six hundred plays which have survived would bear revival to-day? Most of Jonson's contemporaries would have been better playwrights if they had learnt the lesson which he tried to teach. Dryden said of him 'In his

works you find little to retrench or alter. Wit, and language, and humour also in some measure, we had before him; but something of art was wanting to the drama till he came'. That is his abiding epitaph. Something of his rugged independence and sterling honesty was reflected in his art: he deserves all honour for the scrupulous fineness of his literary conscience and for the fibre of his English manhood.

PERCY SIMPSON

## THOMAS GRAY AND THE FINE ARTS

Encore si risibles que soient ces amateurs, ils ne sont pas tout à fait à dédaigner. Ils sont les premiers essais de la nature qui veut créer l'artiste, aussi informes, aussi peu viables que ces premiers animaux qui précéderent les espèces actuelles et qui n'étaient pas constitués pour durer. . . .

Mais dès que l'intelligence raisonneuse veut se mettre à juger des œuvres d'art, il n'y a plus rien de fixe de certain : on peut démontrer tout ce qu'on veut. Alors que la réalité du talent est un bien, une acquisition universelle, dont on doit avant tout constater la présence sous les modes apparentes de la pensée et du style, c'est sur ces derniers que la critique s'arrête pour classer les auteurs.

PROUST, *Le Temps Retrouvé*, ii. 44, 45.

### I

IF an examination paper were to be circulated amongst intelligent people asking by whom of the immortals those questioned would choose to be welcomed on the further shore of the Styx, the number and variety of those who named Thomas Gray would certainly be large. A good reason for this, apart from the endearing and to some minds not less attractive because inscrutable character revealed in his poems and letters, is the extent and diversity of his attainments and interests. The well-known obituary panegyric written by William Johnstone Temple includes in a long list of branches of knowledge mastered by Gray, 'a fine taste in painting, prints, architecture and gardening', but strange to say, not music, although this is mentioned so frequently in the letters and odes that it may almost be assumed as certain that of all the arts its appeal to him was the most deeply felt and lasting.

Amongst those who would on disembarking from Charon's boat naturally seek for Gray, and might be expecting to receive a gratifying welcome from him, would be three or four of more than half a dozen editors who have devoted themselves to publishing parts of his writings, not one succeeding even when attempting it in assembling all of them in one work. The latest and most pretentious collection appeared sixty years ago, and even then fell very short of the better standards of editing at that date. Since then the *English Poems* have been edited by the Rev. D. C. Tovey (1898), a model book of its kind only needing revision with the aid of original material since brought to light to



be perfect.<sup>1</sup> The same scholar's miscellany *Gray and his Friends* (1890) includes much of permanent value, particularly in connexion with the subject of the present paper, the most remarkable of the travel-notes written by the poet when in Italy. Mr. Tovey followed these up with his publication of Gray's *Letters* in three volumes of 'Bohn's Standard Library' (1900-12),<sup>2</sup> a work never likely to be superseded entirely as far as the introductions and annotations are concerned. It might perhaps be called, in emulation of the *Poemata-Grayo-Bentleiana*, 'Notes by the Rev. Mr. Tovey for Letters by Mr. T. Gray', a jest which the learned, caustic, and witty editor would have been the first to understand. A quarter of a century later Dr. Paget Toynbee, having discovered a wealth of material previously unknown or only incompletely printed, took up the task with two sumptuously and beautifully produced volumes, *Correspondence of Gray, Walpole, West and Ashton* (Oxford, 1915). He died before putting the finishing touches to his elaborate definitive edition of Gray's entire *Correspondence*; it was completed with equal mastery and erudition by Mr. Leonard Whibley in three volumes (Oxford, 1935).<sup>3</sup>

It is largely from his letters that Gray's views on artistic matters have to be gleaned, but most revealing, perhaps, are the summary journals and comments written during his tour in France and Italy in 1739-41. Unfortunately these have only in part been published, and edited with varying skill and conscientiousness, in three separate works. The manuscripts of most importance are those once in the Morris Collection now belonging to Eton College Library, and in the possession of Sir John Murray. Mr. Tovey pointed out that Gray kept two sets of notes, overlapping and in certain respects duplicating one another.<sup>4</sup> The French series printed by him is from the Morris Collection. Sir Edmund Gosse published those from the Murray note-book covering the same journey.<sup>5</sup> But very characteristically he not only suppressed but ignored the existence of the equally important observations

<sup>1</sup> Cited in footnotes that follow as Tovey *Poems*.

<sup>2</sup> Cited in footnotes that follow as Tovey *Letters*.

<sup>3</sup> Cited in footnotes that follow as Toynbee-Whibley *Correspondence*. The admirable indexes, arranged scientifically with references to the letters in numerical order as printed, are, it must be admitted, confusing to use. References here are to the volumes and pages. The pagination is in a single series running through the three volumes.

<sup>4</sup> *Gray and his Friends*, pp. 203-4.

<sup>5</sup> *Works of Gray*, 1884, i. 236-46.

made on the road from Annecy to Florence. That they exist in the manuscript is clear from a footnote by Toynbee-Whibley<sup>1</sup> and quotations on later pages of the same book. It would be particularly regrettable that no more of them should be available if it could be assumed that they include notes made by Gray upon pictures at Parma, Modena, and above all Bologna, for these, in view of the estimation accorded to the galleries and local schools of painting of these cities at that date, would be of paramount interest. But it seems almost certain from those quotations that there is no material of this kind in the manuscript.<sup>2</sup> War-time conditions have made it impossible for Sir John Murray to exercise his well-known hereditary generosity in allowing access to the inestimable manuscripts in his possession, so that this gap must remain unfilled for the present.

The somewhat disappointing Florentine section was printed by Tovey from the Eton manuscript.<sup>3</sup> A number of observations recorded in Rome were published by the Rev. John Mitford.<sup>4</sup> Whether others have vanished it is impossible to say, but it is curious that in the printed portion only the Capitol amongst public collections is included, the remainder dealing with private palaces and relatively unremarkable churches. By far the most vivid and revealing of the notes describe Gray's journey to and sojourn in Naples. They are also in the Morris manuscript and printed by Tovey.<sup>5</sup> Nothing relating to the journey home by way of Venice is extant. An exceedingly curious and noteworthy detached paper contains a list of imaginary pictures of subjects assigned by the poet to sundry of the old masters as most likely to call forth the characteristics generally held to be the most individual in their existing works. Published first by William Mason,<sup>6</sup> this is reprinted by Tovey.<sup>7</sup> There also is in the British Museum a transcript by Mitford of Gray's annotations in a guide-book to Wilton House,<sup>8</sup> which he visited in October 1764, unpublished and conceivably of some interest. Even allow-

<sup>1</sup> Toynbee-Whibley, *Correspondence*, i. 112.    <sup>2</sup> *Correspondence*, i. 132-4.

<sup>3</sup> *Gray and his Friends*, 216-22.

<sup>4</sup> *Works of Gray*, 1836, iv. 225-305.    <sup>5</sup> *Gray and his Friends*, 223-60.

<sup>6</sup> *Poems of Mr. Gray. To which are prefixed Memoirs of his Life and Writings*, 8vo edition, 1775, iv. 97-102.

<sup>7</sup> Tovey, *Letters*, iii. 64-6, note 3.

<sup>8</sup> Add. MS. 32561. Toynbee-Whibley, *Correspondence*, iii. 1064, note 9, 1067.

ing for the absence of manuscripts temporarily in abeyance there is, therefore, more than sufficient matter to furnish at least an outline of Gray's knowledge and taste in so far as they were concerned with a good many celebrated antique statues, and pictures by the old masters of the period and schools then thought most deserving of admiration. He has very little to say about classical or Renaissance architecture. This is regrettable, for the allusions in letters, as well as a short memorandum, first published by J. T. Mathias<sup>1</sup> and reprinted by Gosse,<sup>2</sup> on the character of some English Romanesque buildings, show critical sagacity in connexion with medieval structural details which it would have been interesting to see applied to those of earlier and later styles.

In general Gray's aesthetic standards were those of educated people of his time and class, but expressed with clearness and force only possible to few. Modern writers, breathing the rarefied superior strata of the critical atmosphere, make great play sarcastically with the phrase 'I know what I like'. Gray's candid version of a similar thought, one of the most pregnant of his aphorisms, is 'Call this what you please, but you must allow that it is beautiful'.<sup>3</sup> As a beginning of wisdom, even as a vague acceptance of the sort of moral element which our ancestors found it difficult to disentangle from aesthetic satisfaction, there is possibly something to be said for such a position especially when it was supported by the belief that there was definable orthodoxy in matters of beauty as in others then thought to be of more serious moment. Probably the dilettanti of the eighteenth century would not have found it easy to share with the leaders of modern artistic thought that particular 'one of the great pleasures of life, liberation from an unconscious insincerity'. Or to say that they could remember 'with real relief the moment when it was no longer necessary to simulate admiration for'—let us, to complete the parallelism, substitute the saccharine, simpering Madonnas and melodramatically enraptured martyrs of the Italian Counter-Reformation for the 'stiff, swollen, grinning monsters, the sixth century Apollos, which fashion has persuaded us to admire'.<sup>4</sup> Simulated admiration for things that the spectator

<sup>1</sup> *Works of Thomas Gray*, 1814, ii.

<sup>2</sup> *Works of Gray*, 1884, i. 295-301.

<sup>3</sup> Tovey, *Letters*, ii. 291. Toynbee-Whibley, *Correspondence*, iii. 1302.

<sup>4</sup> *Last Lectures by Roger Fry*, edited by Sir Kenneth Clark, K.C.B., 1939, p. xxviii.

did not rightly understand was in those days a matter of refinement more than necessity. Insincerity, whether unconscious, sub-conscious, or conscious, seems to have been customarily deprecated, and any lapses into candour and truthfulness, if then already amongst the great pleasures of life, have in general acquired an added rarity value in recent times.

## II

In music again, Gray shared the orthodox taste of his time. Tovey's readers partake of his good fortune in possessing the results of his co-operation with his son, the very distinguished Professor Sir Donald Francis Tovey. Gray detested French, and was a cordial admirer of Italian opera and singing.<sup>1</sup> But in a letter to Mason he observes that even these since he remembered operas had been nothing but 'eternal passages, divisions, & flights of execution'; he evidently set less store by these things and the 'celestial' top notes, heard only once in a whole evening, than upon expression.<sup>2</sup> A short correspondence carried on by him with the cosmopolitan connoisseur and savant, Count Algarotti, through the intervention of a young Pembroke College man, William Taylor How, is remarkable. At first sight these somewhat formal epistles might seem to expound the poet's views on music and some other arts (as will presently appear) in a more deliberate and thought-out manner than elsewhere, but they are expressed in rather stilted language and a slightly controversial tone, and are not so convincing as his intimate letters and private note-books. In one place he confesses to Algarotti 'the truth is, the Opera itself, tho supported here at a great expence for so many years, has rather maintain'd itself by the admiration bestow'd on a few particular voices, or the borrow'd taste of a few Men of condition, that have learn'd in Italy how to admire, than by any genuine love we bear to the best Italian musick.'<sup>3</sup> In short, he belonged to that half of the audience, divided then as in more modern times, who considered the music itself as more important than the star singers. None the less he was an attentive and discriminating critic of these latter, and his comments upon them in his letters (yet more were entered in the music books to be

<sup>1</sup> Toynbee-Whibley, *Correspondence*, i. 103, 130, 131.

<sup>2</sup> 22 Jan. 1761 : *Ib.* ii. 723.

<sup>3</sup> 9 Sept. 1763 : *Ib.* 812.

mentioned shortly) are most interesting to compare with those of professional musicians like Dr. Burney. It is on record that 'he was not partial to the music of Handel',<sup>1</sup> and the only German composer he mentions is Carl Philipp Emmanuel, the second son of Johann Sebastian Bach, whose 'Lessons (for Piano-Forte Harpsichord)' seemed to him 'charming' and speaking 'not only musick, but passion' as well as being 'in the best Italian style'.<sup>2</sup> The 'dab' of manuscript music collected by him in Italy formed six large volumes, 'chiefly the work of Pergolesi and the old Italian masters, with notices also of the chief singers of the time, the operas in which they appeared and the arias they sang'. These books were sold with others of his in 1845.<sup>3</sup> They are not further described by any editors of his works, and the present writer has no idea what has become of them.

About his own performance Gray was modest, perhaps with justice. Shortly after his return from Italy he wrote to Chute of his 'strumming', lamenting that he 'had not seen the face of a *Haspical*' since he came home.<sup>4</sup> The Rev. William Cole records that the poet played 'and sang to his own accompaniment with taste and feeling to *him*, but not without solicitation'.<sup>5</sup> In writing to Mason about the above-mentioned pieces by C. P. E. Bach, Gray says that, although they are not hard, he cannot play them, but only 'make a smattering that serves to *deceive my solitary days*' (a quotation from a sonnet just sent to him by the Precentor of York).<sup>6</sup>

It seems likely that he generally had in his rooms a keyboard instrument of some kind. It is not on record that he accepted the reversion of the Kirkman harpsichord offered to him by Mason;<sup>7</sup> but in a later year he borrowed his friend's pianoforte made by Zumpe,<sup>8</sup> the subject of one of Mitford's and Gosse's most ingenious etymological annotations.<sup>9</sup> When he died he possessed another pianoforte, the gift of Stonhewer. It is to be feared the 'little harpsichord where the poet used to sit in the

<sup>1</sup> Tovey, *Letters*, i. 107, note.

<sup>2</sup> July 1763: Toynbee-Whibley, *Correspondence*, ii. 804.

<sup>3</sup> Tovey, *Letters*, i. 106, note.

<sup>4</sup> 24 May 1742: Toynbee-Whibley, *Correspondence*, i. 208.

<sup>5</sup> Tovey, *Letters*, i. 107, note.

<sup>6</sup> July 1763: Toynbee-Whibley, *Correspondence*, ii. 804.

<sup>7</sup> 27 June 1755: *ib.* i. 424.

<sup>8</sup> 23 May 1767: *Ib.* iii. 957.

<sup>9</sup> Gosse, *Works*, iii. 267, note, and Tovey, *Letters*, iii. 138.

twilight and play toccatas of Scarlatti and Pergolesi', the first of whom he never mentions, while the other, although his favourite composer, did not excel in music of that kind, is one of the purple patches, rather perhaps mauve vignettes, in what Tovey describes as Gosse's 'amusing and popular life of Gray',<sup>1</sup> which has faded somewhat under the light of research.<sup>2</sup>

Gray alludes more than once to performances on the then fashionable toy, the Musical Glasses or Harmonica, as affording him great pleasure.<sup>3</sup>

### III

With the exception of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* probably no English lyrical poems have supplied native artists with so many subjects and titles for pictures as the *Elegy* and the *Bard*. Gray's imagery itself often seems to reflect things that he had seen painted. It is therefore curious that in his own annotations to the poems, while candidly indicating his imitated phrases, he only once mentions a pictorial inspiration. This is connected with the description of the Bard.

Loose his beard, and hoary hair  
Stream'd, like a meteor, to the troubled air.

Gray's note runs: 'the image was taken from a well-known picture of Raphael representing the supreme being in the vision of Ezekiel: there are two of these paintings, both believed to be originals, one at Florence, the other at Paris.'<sup>4</sup> Gray's connoisseurship is somewhat out of date; the design alone is nowadays accepted as Raphael's; the small panel in the Pitti was painted by one of his immediate followers; but that seen by the poet in the Orleans Collection, and now belonging to the Duke of Westminster, is thought to be a later copy. It is characteristic of Mason, the self-satisfied dilettante and amateur painter, that

<sup>1</sup> Tovey, *Letters*, i, p. viii, note.

<sup>2</sup> Gosse, *Gray in English Men of Letters*, 1882, p. 127. It is rather to be wondered at that Sir Edmund, with his intimate association with Browning, did not write 'Galuppi' and 'Clavichord'. He means Domenico Scarlatti, who only published one slim book of 'Essercizj' during his life, which was spent in considerable part at Madrid. His Sonatas no doubt circulated in MS. to some extent. Gray may have known some of them.

<sup>3</sup> 28 Mar. 1760; 8 Dec. 1761; 8 Feb. 1763: Tovey, *Letters*, ii. 115, 246 notes; Toynbee-Whibley, *Correspondence*, ii. 664, 766, 796.

<sup>4</sup> Tovey, *Poems*, p. 209.

he should have added: 'Mr. Gray never saw the large cartoon, done by the same divine hand, in the possession of the Duke of Montagu at his seat of Boughton in Northamptonshire, else I am persuaded he would have mentioned it in this note. The two finished pictures abroad (which I believe are closet-pieces) can hardly have so much spirit in them as this wonderful drawing; it gave me the sublimest idea I ever received from painting.'<sup>1</sup> Even Horace Walpole in 1763 felt sceptical about this cartoon.<sup>2</sup> J. D. Passavant, an excellent judge, pronounces it to be a weak Parisian enlargement of the period of Louis XIV, made in preparation for a Gobelins tapestry;<sup>3</sup> other writers on Raphael ignore it. In a letter to Bedingfield Gray, after telling his friend that the 'air of head, w<sup>ch</sup> I tried to express' had been 'borrow'd from painting', and that the Raphael in the Orleans Collection, seen by him, naturally, before the superior Florentine version, added '(if you have been at Parma) you may remember Moses breaking the Tables by the Parmeggiano, w<sup>ch</sup> comes still nearer to my meaning'.<sup>4</sup> And nine years later, when advising Palgrave to make a point of seeing this fresco when he was in Italy, the poet remarks that it is 'at too great a height, and ill lighted, but immense',<sup>5</sup> a judgement which those who have for Gray's sake made a pilgrimage to the Madonna della Steccata, and have tried to see the figure on the soffit of one of the arches of the cupola, will readily subscribe. Sir Joshua Reynolds in his Fifteenth Discourse accepts the 'Moses' as the primary source of the poet's inspiration, and he must have known the Raphael well.<sup>6</sup>

It must always prove instructive to study the responses of a highly cultivated intellect and taste to appeals believed at the time to be based upon the inexpugnable security of aesthetic standards subsequently undermined and fallen—perhaps only a grandiloquent way of saying gone out of fashion. It is in fact only by trying to put ourselves into the positions of spirits such as Gray's in his period that we can hope to attain the perfect

<sup>1</sup> *The Poems of Mr. Gray to which are added Memoirs of his Life and Writings*, 8vo. edition, 1778, i. 128.

<sup>2</sup> 'Visits to Country Seats, &c.', Walpole Society, xvi. 54-5.

<sup>3</sup> *Life of Raphael*, 1860, ii. 151.

<sup>4</sup> 27 Aug. 1756: Toynbee-Whibley, *Correspondence*, ii. 476-7.

<sup>5</sup> March 1765: *Ib.* ii. 867.

<sup>6</sup> A good engraving of the Parmigianino illustrates Burnet's edition of the *Discourses*, 1844.

catholicity of appreciation which should properly be the aim of every historian of art. A somewhat similar coeval personality, but one of more alert although less refined perceptions, and more rigidly orthodox and hence less open-minded views, was the Président Charles de Brosses. The two men must often have contemplated the same things within brief spaces of time, although they can never actually have met. The fragmentary records of Gray's travels gain vividness when read in conjunction with the two enchanting volumes of the '*Lettres d'Italie*'. It is like looking at a pair of old-fashioned stereoscopic photographs. There is no sign that the poet ever cast a glance at the works of the primitives or the great masters of the fifteenth century even to appraise their place in history and scoff at their badness as the Président did. It is to him that posterity is indebted for the verdict that at that time Giotto would never have been employed even to paint a tennis-court. Gray just alludes to a supposititious Dürer as 'mighty hard and Gothic',<sup>1</sup> and the reader feels it as a concession when he writes of a reputed Perugino that it is 'less hard, and of a greater taste than common with him' yet falls a good deal short of perfection.<sup>2</sup> As no Venetian journal exists we know little about his views on that school, but it was at that time ranked generally as of tertiary importance. He duly admires portraits by Titian at Rome and Florence, but they were rated by him as only portraits. Paris Bordone's 'Lady in Red' in the Pitti is disposed of as 'fat, red hair'd, & the air of a Cook-Wench, but painted to the greatest perfection of Colouring'.<sup>3</sup> The double appeal of the most poignant of all Venetian portrait-groups, the 'Concert' by Giorgione in the same gallery, no doubt touched the music-lover in Gray. After dismissing the other figures as 'perfectly insignificant', he continues: 'the head of the principal one has a most exquisite life & Spirit in the eyes, & is admirably painted.'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mitford, iv. 298.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* 293.

<sup>3</sup> *Gray and his Friends*, p. 222.

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.* The present writer has often wondered whether Mr. Tovey, who first printed this note, was acquainted with the picture, and ever recognized in this head a remarkable likeness to his son Donald. One listener and spectator who often, for hours together, had the privilege of hearing Donald Tovey playing 'to him', as Cole said of Gray, on the harpsichord and pianoforte, during the period when he was Nettleship Scholar of Balliol, was struck at the time by his resemblance to Giorgione's cleric, and can never see the picture without recalling that inspired performance and rapt look.



A master rather outside the topmost hierarchy in the eyes of Gray's contemporaries, but to whom he paid a good deal of attention, was Andrea del Sarto. He appears to have felt that he ought to like the pictures of 'Andrea without Faults' more than he did, and his remarks here more nearly than elsewhere approach reasoned criticism. Before the famous 'Disputà' in the Pitti he reflects, 'from whence he got his great Reputation I know not, Grace & Beauty 'tis certain he was an utter Stranger to; Harmony in the Tout-Ensemble he was ignorant of; his Subjects are always ill-chosen, & if he colour'd a particular figure well, this is by no means sufficient to put him on a rank with the greatest Masters'.<sup>1</sup> Again, in front of a Madonna in the Colonna gallery at Rome, 'This master had no great idea of beauty or dignity. . . . I never saw a virgin of his that suited the character.'<sup>2</sup>

The attitude towards portraiture, already glanced at, which rules out almost everything produced by artists now acclaimed as of the first magnitude, accounts for one astounding blank in the records of both Gray and de Brosses. Some few modern tourists if asked to name the supreme easel-picture in Rome might reply Titian's 'Sacred and Profane Love', but the majority would certainly say Velazquez's 'Pope Innocent X'. Both our travellers spent some time in the Palazzo Pamfili and dwell at length on the 'Sacraments' of Nicholas Poussin, later bought through Sir Joshua Reynolds for the Duke of Rutland and still at Belvoir Castle, and other famous canvases in the gallery; but of the Velazquez there is not one word. Yet Jonathan Richardson, whose book Gray carried with him,<sup>3</sup> fully describes it, but then Richardson's father was a portrait-painter. A sense of disappointment appears even to affect his approach to Guido Reni, beyond doubt the painter of the poet's predilection, when he came to examine the 'famous Ritratto of Cardinal Spada', as elegant and polished an affair as can be imagined. He compares it with the famous Vandyck of Cardinal Bentivoglio, which he justly deemed 'perfectly great. the Colouring fine beyond all expression';<sup>4</sup> and finds the Spada infinitely inferior 'to it and in my opinion to many other portraits of much inferior masters; it

<sup>1</sup> *Gray and his Friends*, p. 220.

<sup>2</sup> Mitford, iv. 247.

<sup>3</sup> *An Account of Statues &c. &c. in France and Italy*, 1722. The 2nd edition, in which the passage about this picture appears on p. 299, 1754.

<sup>4</sup> *Gray and his Friends*, p. 221.

is languid and wants spirit'. These faults, excepting occasionally in the matter of colouring, where they were almost accepted as increasing the ethereal effect, were not in those days usually imputed to Guido's religious and mythological pictures.

The fact that easel-pictures predominate in Gray's catalogues may be owing partly to his travelling companion Horace Walpole, who was on the look-out for bargains for his father's collection. Unfortunately nothing remains to show whether he tried to put into words his emotions upon beholding the overwhelmingly sublime creations of Michelangelo and Raphael in the Vatican. But there is a very long and appreciative account of the frescoes in Sant' Andrea della Valle by Domenichino and Lanfranco. The whole of it, nearly four pages in Mitford's volume, is well worth study. It is without any question one of the most discerning passages of eighteenth-century art criticism, and it is worthy of note that it was written thirty years before the earliest of Reynolds's *Discourses*. Space can only be given here to a few of the most striking sentences. Gray is describing the fresco of the 'Scourging of St. Andrew' by Domenichino.

One of the ruffians, in straining the cord that ties his leg, has cracked it, and is fallen backwards; others are laughing at him: the expression, though low, has something in it that heightens the horror of the thing. These are a sort of circumstances that Shakespeare has often made use of; one sees his murderers have their jokes in the midst of the most tragic events; and when rightly taken, such strokes are surely expressive of the character, and of the want of reflexion, that is the cause of insensibility to others' woes; yet I do not say, these things should be used at random, nor made (as here) the principal objects in a picture.<sup>1</sup>

Equally perspicacious is the account of the decorations, also by Lanfranco, in the Certosa di San Martino at Naples,<sup>2</sup> especially when brought into conjunction with a criticism on the easel-pictures of the same painter; Gray says, 'I never saw anything by this master in oil that pleased me . . . but in his great Fresco compositions, there is a certain greatness, a copious fancy, great harmony throughout, and his draperies are the noblest one can see anywhere'.<sup>3</sup> All this makes it quite clear that he was fully alive to the all-important truth that all great Italian art was invariably imbued with monumental intentions and was ex-

<sup>1</sup> Mitford, iv. 267.

<sup>2</sup> *Gray and his Friends*, pp. 232-5.

<sup>3</sup> Mitford, iv. 293-4.

pressly designed for settings architectonic in scope. Divorced from them it inevitably loses part of its significance.<sup>1</sup> This is much more obvious and disastrous in the case of sculpture and affects in some degree even less imposing objects. In Gray's lifetime the day was scarcely beginning to dawn when the hackneyed journalists' phrase 'priceless art treasures' would come to be applied and indeed confined to portable, and even more, saleable things, the exalted *price* of which is, in point of fact, the only attribute they possess now at all widely appreciated. It is grievous to reflect that it was British possessive collectors of whom Horace Walpole was a prototype who started this movement.

The response of an intellect and sensibility such as Gray's to the greatest art *sub specie aeternitatis* is easily taken for granted.<sup>2</sup> But it might have been enlightening to those now wandering in twilight, if not stumbling in darkness, to have had the flashing torch of his understanding focused on such achievements as the gallery of the Palazzo Farnese, and other decorative triumphs of the Carracci; the semi-dome of San Domenico at Bologna, the Rospigliosi 'Aurora', and other frescoes by Guido. He does write of one of the master's large decorations, the cupola of the private chapel of the Quirinal Palace, and praises the 'faces and airs of heads' as 'divinely beautiful',<sup>3</sup> and is equally enthusiastic about his other works in the same place. In the altar-piece, an Annunciation, he discerned 'such heavenly beauty in both figures as no words can express', though he criticized the form of the Virgin as out of drawing.<sup>4</sup> In a 'Saint Mary Magdalen with Angels' in the Barberini Gallery he saw 'such beauty and sorrow sure as never were seen in any mortal creature . . . colouring solemnly sweet, though all is light and exquisitely harmonious; most

<sup>1</sup> There is an eloquent passage in Southey's *Doctor* (interchapter x) describing with delicate sympathy the loss of spiritual atmosphere occurring when pictures are torn out of the surroundings for which they were painted.

<sup>2</sup> Judging from Gray's astonishment and delight on first arriving in Rome, expressed in a letter to his mother of 2 April 1740 (Toynbee-Whibley, *Correspondence*, i. 146), it is perhaps permissible to hope that this emotional response may have marked for him, as it formerly did for others, that central moment of life believed by modern idealism to be determined by a very different source of gratification. (Compare for example *Leonardo da Vinci* by Sir Kenneth Clark, K.C.B., p. 161, ll. 14-15; also p. 126, l. 12.)

<sup>3</sup> Mitford, iv. 253.

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.* iv. 252.

divine'.<sup>1</sup> Similar phrases of exalted panegyric about others of Guido's pictures might be gathered from the journals. Typical and unusually detailed are his remarks on the St. Michael in Santa Maria della Concezione, a picture which in spite of the frown of fashion is still admired and familiar.

The celebrated St. Michael; rather larger than life. The Devil prostrate among burnt rocks, with fire issuing from among the clefts; on whose head he sets one foot, the other rests lightly on the ground; his wings spread, in one hand the sword, in the other the chain in which Satan is bound; armed in a coat of mail, a loose sash flowing across it. Indignation, it is true, does not appear in his countenance, for he is triumphing over a vanquished and confounded enemy, but rather a noble scorn, and somewhat as Milton says,—Severe in youthful beauty, but so angelical a beauty, such a head, as this master only could imagine. The Sveltezza, and lightness of the whole figure, added to the marvellous sweep its attitude gives it, makes it a most divine picture, and the colouring is all gay and harmonious.<sup>2</sup>

Mitford's transcripts miss a little of the vividness imparted by the poet's own peculiarities of phrasing and punctuation; Tovey's text is much better and from it is taken the following account of a picture in the Certosa at Naples. 'In the Choir behind the Great Altar is the Nativity, fig: as large as life. the Joseph is the only one quite compleat, for he left the picture unfinished. it shews no decay of Genius at all, & the heads have all that Divine beauty one sees only in his works—'.<sup>3</sup> Guido's age, that of the Counter-Reformation, was an essentially religious one, and his Biblical and Hagiological compositions have always stimulated the devout aspirations of the Roman Catholic world. But Gray's sincere piety seems to have been of a Protestant type, and it must have been for strictly artistic reasons that he could write of the pictures of sacred subjects in the Borghese Gallery as including 'Several of Rafaël, Titian, Andrea del Sarto &c., but in none of them all, that heavenly grace and beauty, that Guido gave, and that Carlo Maratt has so well imitated in subjects of this nature'.<sup>4</sup>

Matthew Arnold in one of his *Essays in Criticism* has written

<sup>1</sup> Mitford, iv. 280.

<sup>2</sup> Ib. 242.

<sup>3</sup> Gray and his Friends, pp. 234-5.

<sup>4</sup> Mitford, iv. 231. The Borghese Gallery has been rifled and also enriched since that time, and judging from Richardson's list, none of the works of painters named by Gray were of much importance, though he accepted them as authentic.

with his customary perspicacity and eloquence of the great qualities of mind and soul which are revealed in Gray's letters and in his friends' records of him. If it is not too much to claim that his art criticism was inspired by a similar spirit, the modern approach to Guido will have to be cleared of a good deal of ignorant prejudice.<sup>1</sup> There were several reasons why the artist's reputation should have become dimmed in the nineteenth century. Like many another painter who enjoyed great success in his lifetime, he produced much unworthy work, and money troubles pushed him into keeping, like Rubens and Vandyck (two notorious instances out of many), a picture-manufactory. Besides this the fashion for his work amongst wealthy but misguided British collectors during the eighteenth century flooded this country not only with bad genuine examples but with hundreds of copies bought as originals.<sup>2</sup> The effect was that connoisseurship, a largely home-made English pursuit, became stultified and ended by discarding good and bad together. The coincidence of the discovery of the beauties of the art which had preceded also drew off admiration from that which had followed the Golden Age, scarcely a logically consistent process as it only affected the Italians, leaving painters like Rubens and Murillo, also inspired in their religious pictures by the spirit of the Counter-Reformation, in full enjoyment of their fame. Indeed, had the artist who created the vast tragic 'Pietà' and the shimmeringly effulgent 'Paliotto', both in the gallery of his native city Bologna (not to speak of his frescoes), happened to have lived and worked, not there but in Seville or Antwerp, there can be no doubt that he would have retained his worshippers for two generations more, and those of catholic understandings for even longer.

The same religious spirit was nourished at the same period by a strongly contrasting realistic school of art. Spain was then and later the head-quarters of naturalism, and Naples, a Spanish-ruled city, profited by the presence of Ribera-Spagnoletto, in some respects the most typical painter of the movement. An earlier

<sup>1</sup> The authoress of a recent book, 'The Face without a Frown', 1944, p. 185, writes of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, a lady belonging to an extinct type of highly cultivated taste and unconventional intelligence, as having had 'an unfortunate admiration for Guido Reni'.

<sup>2</sup> 'C'est la difficulté de discerner les originaux des copies, qui a fait tomber en France les tableaux Italiens. On ne dupe plus que les Anglais.' (Diderot, *Salon de 1767*, in *Œuvres Complètes* par Assezat, 1876, xi. 302.)

and perhaps even more powerful motive force, and a purely Italian one, was Caravaggio. Guercino's very original genius absorbed both influences, and the fruits of his long and busy career are in countless churches and galleries. Gray has something to say about all these masters. He had, as we have seen in his note on Domenichino's 'Saint Andrew', doubts about the degree to which realism is legitimate. But if there is only a faint hope of making proselytes to his cult of Guido, that of converting moderns to his disapproval of Caravaggio is scarcely existent.

Perhaps many people might be prepared to agree with two of his verdicts; one, upon the famous 'Gamesters' in the Barberini Palace, that 'if this master had known his own talent, which was that in painting which comedy is in writing, a just imitation of common nature, he would far have surpassed the Flemish school'<sup>1</sup>; the other upon a head in the Borghese Gallery, that in spite of depicting 'a coarse wench' it possessed 'vast life and nature'.<sup>2</sup> It is when this style was applied to sacred subjects that the poet became scandalized. He describes a picture, in the Spada Collection, representing a 'Girl at work . . . an ordinary, dirty, sullen creature, that pouts', with an old woman who 'seems scolding with a malicious sort of smile'. It is 'the very perfection of low nature: . . . admirable, considered as such'. But when it is perceived that the intention was to depict the Virgin and Saint Anne, 'nothing can be a better proof of this master's absurdity and want of judgment'.<sup>3</sup> And, after condemning in detail for similar defects three more Biblical pictures by Caravaggio, he closes with 'several other capital ones. Same indecent style and unnatural colouring.'<sup>4</sup> Two very famous paintings by Guercino come into Gray's lists. One is the Spada 'Dido on the Funeral Pyre', the other the 'Santa Petronilla' in the Capitol. He thought the head of Dido 'truly fine, full of expression, and very beautiful', but found fault with the figure of Anna, and dismisses the accessory personages as 'low and not proper for such a scene'; clinching the matter as a poet with 'He had not read Virgil undoubtedly'.<sup>5</sup> In general he shared the prevailing veneration for the other mighty composition, and in particular he commends the figure of the Saint in heaven 'who kneels with all the modesty and humble beauty it is possible to express', but he thought the

<sup>1</sup> Mitford, iv. 277.

<sup>2</sup> Ib. 233.

<sup>3</sup> Ib. 228.

<sup>4</sup> Ib. 232.

<sup>5</sup> Ib. 229-30.

colouring extravagantly mannered and 'the shades mere soot'.<sup>1</sup> His appraisements of realism in general are very lucid in connexion with yet another Guercino, seen in an unimportant church on the road from Rome to Naples, and Poussin's 'Martyrdom of Saint Erasmus' in the Vatican. Of the first he writes:

The Martyrdom of S. Bartholomew, a famous picture, the 2 ruffians, who are employ'd about that bloody work are greatly in character, & are figures of much spirit. for the rest the Saint seems to feel nothing of the matter, but all his thoughts are fix'd on heaven. this is too tame for if he suffer'd nothing he was no martyr, & he might have shew'd the pains he endured, yet with dignity too; nor is the figure very well drawn.<sup>2</sup>

Of the Poussin he decides

the subject is too horrible for painting: . . . I do not apprehend why a scene that on account of its horror (even supposing it capable of being ever so lively represented,) would be utterly improper to introduce in a drama, (which is a combination of poetry and painting,) should be thought a fit subject to be set before the eyes in a picture.<sup>3</sup>

The text of the Neapolitan note-book, occupying thirty-six out of fifty-five pages devoted by Tovey to Gray's continental journals, has already been noticed as the most lively and readable of the whole, although Mitford's Roman selection supplies passages of deeper critical insight. Read in the light of modern conditions by anybody following the poet's footsteps, no page is more moving than that depicting the treasures of the Naples Certosa, and the overwhelmingly tragic altar-piece by Ribera, now closing a vista of plundered and empty repositories, the only thing left of all the splendours which astonished Gray, and gaining from its desecrated surroundings an acute pathos more readily felt than put into words.

a Pietà, large as life. only the Virgin, & S. John—[Gray strangely failed to observe the figures of Saint Mary Magdalen and Saint Joseph]—she has a fine expression of Sorrow, but without beauty, or grace; the other a very mean, & ordinary figure: but the dead Christ, who is thrown in a very uncommon attitude upon her knees—in fact He is supported by Saint John—is a most admirable figure both for drawing & colouring: nothing can be more easy, & it perfectly comes forward from the Canvass. the finest thing I

<sup>1</sup> Ib. 252.

<sup>2</sup> *Gray and his Friends*, p. 224.

<sup>3</sup> Mitford, iv. 251.

ever saw of him. it cost 4,000 Ducats but the Fathers now esteem it at 10,000—Spagnuoletto — — Here are Ornaments for the Altar of amazing richness. half-figures of several Saints bigger than life, a Statue of the Virgin, great numbers of wrought stands, & large vases, all of massy Silver, & a Custodia adorn'd with Sapphires, Emeralds, Topazes & Rubies of a huge size.<sup>1</sup>

Only space for three more observations on paintings can be given here. The first has to do with the celebrated Domenichino in the Villa Borghese, familiar to every tourist; the second is quoted because it is an appreciation of a picture by Annibale Carracci to be seen every day in normal times at the National Gallery; the third refers to the highly controversial question of condition, in connexion with a masterpiece by Titian, also at Trafalgar Square, and by many accounted the most inestimable treasure of the whole collection.

Diana with her nymphs shooting at a mark, figures about half life. It is very famous, I can't tell for what. On the foreground is a lake, with two nymphs bathing · beyond them the rest exercising, and the Goddess herself, who holds up the prize. The attitudes for the most part without grace, and the whole not agreeable.<sup>2</sup>

Peter going from Rome, and meeting Christ bearing his Cross; who, when he asked him, '*Quo vadis Domine?*' answered, '*Iterum crucifigi*'. The apostle starts back with astonishment and horror, and lifts up both his hands. The Christ (an exquisite figure) points towards the city, and with his looks upbraids the saint's timidity. His eyes, that silently reproach him, with a mixture of love and sorrow in the countenance, and the head a little inclining to one shoulder, conveying as moving an idea as it is possible for painting to express.<sup>3</sup>

An admirable description as far as it goes, but a modern spectator may well feel surprised that the tender harmonies of blues in the light of daybreak do not seem to have attracted the poet's attention; yet they are an integral part of the mood of the episode represented. This picture was bought for the Nation in 1826, in the same year and from the same source as the 'Bacchus and Ariadne' to be mentioned later. Some curious particulars of the transaction and the censure it excited at the time have been gathered by Mr. W. T. Whitley.<sup>4</sup> As early as that a critic was found to protest that 'the Carracci should not have been bought

<sup>1</sup> *Gray and his Friends*, p. 234.

<sup>2</sup> Mitford, iv. 232.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* 297.

<sup>4</sup> *Art in England, 1821-1837, 1930*, pp. 103-5.



at all', but even those unable to admire it would have to admit that, included with the Titian and a superb Nicholas Poussin for £9,000, it may be said to have been thrown into the bargain.

Heated and bitter as artistic controversies easily become, few such disputes take on the acerbity aroused by questions of the state of preservation of old pictures and their inevitable reparation. Within the last year a Member was found ready to raise in Parliament the query whether the renowned 'Cornaro Family', by Titian, had, as it stands now, ever been seen by that artist at all.<sup>1</sup> It is conceivable, but perhaps rather too much to expect, that the Honourable Gentleman was aware that Sir Joshua Reynolds had stated, in 1786, that after this canvas 'had been cleaned and painted upon' in his time, 'from being an original of inestimable value', it was, in his opinion, hardly worth the rank of a good copy; however, he added, 'this is to painters' eyes only'.<sup>2</sup> More than thirty years later Benjamin West, with more minute emphasis, told Joseph Farington 'that the picture was totally ruined by a Frenchman who . . . painted over it. Nothing remains of the original but a Candle stick & part of the upper corner of the right hand . . . when looking at it'.<sup>3</sup> Gray, after describing the other Titian in unmistakable detail as 'A Bacchanal', says that 'it has been ill used, the colours are all peeled off in many places; yet it is in high esteem'.<sup>4</sup> Other severe strictures on what the picture was supposed to have suffered from restoration are cited by Mr. Whitley in the pages referred to. But to say that this *Poesia*, as its painter called it, is only 'in high esteem' would be greatly understating the emotions it now excites. Sir Charles Holroyd, a former Director of the National Gallery of outstanding taste and susceptibility, used to say that if the building were to be on fire, this Titian would have been the first thing he would have hurried to save. The foregoing quotations, too often with regrettably irreverent truncation, indicate the main directions in which Gray's taste and knowledge lay. Further paragraphs eulogizing Guido and condemning Caravaggio, and perhaps better adapted for displaying the poet's point of view, could be added; and, had space been available, his remarks on

<sup>1</sup> Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, Friday, 26 May 1944, reported in *The Times*.

<sup>2</sup> *The Letters of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, edited by F. W. Hilles, 1929, p. 159.

<sup>3</sup> *The Farington Diary*, viii. 179.

<sup>4</sup> Mitford, iv. 296.

several other artists, Baroccio and Salvator Rosa in particular, might have been given places in this outline sketch.

#### IV

Between the age of Gray and our own there have intervened that of Winckelmann and the whole of the excavations and resultant archaeology of the last century and more. One rather strange outcome of all this has been that immeasurably increased familiarity with ancient monuments has not restrained, has perhaps rather accelerated, the impulse to abandon the dogma that only by closely imitating them could modern art hope to arrive at equal excellence. In recent years there has even been a vigorous renewal of appreciation of Bernini and his school, both as sculptors and architects. The Barocco, already beginning in the poet's day to yield place to the Neo-Classic, largely owing to the discoveries at Herculaneum, seen by Gray barely a year after the first of them had come to light, has now once again a widespread cult of its own. Greco-Roman art had no doubt especial attractions for Gray as a classical scholar. But unfortunately his notes mostly take the form of dry inventories of buildings and sculptures, and those still existing do not seem even to show any deliberate emphasis of choice. He was interested by the paintings from Herculaneum and devotes a long passage to them. The Achilles, whom Chiron 'is instructing to touch the Lyre', struck him as 'a perfectly genteel figure' who looks up in the other's face with a natural innocent air. But in the Centaur he found more, the head is 'excellent for the air, & expression; the hair & beard very great & bold in a Style like Rafael; the naked too of the human part is fine, but the Horse (his hinder parts) is vastly too small'. Of the figure of Theseus, in the scene of his triumph after slaying the Minotaur, he thought the 'head with the Sweep of the body as far as the middle . . . very noble' and resembling 'the famous Meleager: the legs & arms, particularly the extremities are vastly inferiour, & good for little'.<sup>1</sup> The statue of Meleager itself, now in the Belvedere of the Vatican, he had seen in the Picchini Palace, and thought it, although not 'worked to that imitation of real flesh' which he had admired elsewhere, in 'a noble Greek taste'.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Gray and his Friends*, pp. 255-6.

<sup>2</sup> Mitford, iv. 254.

An archaeologist who had devoted his researches, like the learned authors of the English catalogue of the Capitoline Museum, to marbles of the Hellenistic period would doubtless be able to identify several of the statues and reliefs mentioned by Gray and still in that collection and elsewhere. But as with the pictures mentioned in passing by him, it would hardly be worth the trouble, for perhaps even more than with these latter, estimates of merit have changed, pieces formerly accounted valuable have disappeared into storerooms, and of those then to be seen in private palaces some have been absorbed into museums and others sold abroad. Gray's views about all the more celebrated masterpieces, including the 'Apollo', the 'Laocoon', and the 'Torso', would be welcome if they had been amongst his notes. Instead of them there are only his eulogies of three, the 'Lion' still on the staircase of the Barberini Palace, the 'Slumbering Faun' then in the same collection and now in the Glyptothek at Munich, and the 'Dying Gaul', of the Capitol. Of the first he writes, 'The famous lion, as big as life, mezzo-relievo, stalking along in surly majesty, prodigiously grand and natural'.<sup>1</sup> The 'Barberini Faun', still universally acclaimed as one of the finest productions of the Hellenistic age, he describes as 'The sleeping Fawn (or rather Bacchus) much beyond life'—[in scale, that is to say]—'he sits on a rock, one arm thrown over his head, and one leg raised; he sleeps, but unquietly; great care and uneasiness in the countenance; noblest style possible and perfectly fine in every respect'.<sup>2</sup> 'The dying Gladiator . . . large as life, of the finest white marble; ' he judged to be 'for expression (after the Laocoon) to be sure the noblest statue in the world'.<sup>3</sup>

In these criticisms there is the same sort of surprising inconsistency that is noticeable in Winckelmann, who, descanting upon the majestic repose of the antique ideal, chose the 'Laocoon Group' in exemplification. It might have been expected of Gray, with his adoration for Guido and general distaste for realism, that he would have pitched upon something of the insipid type of the 'Belvedere Apollo' preferably to the 'Barberini Faun' for such forcibly worded commendation. De Brosses was in many respects in advance of his day; the views held by him about the historical sequence of styles in art, sketchy and inexact as they are, find no counterpart in Gray excepting on a single occasion when

<sup>1</sup> *Ib.* 272.<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* 280-1.<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* 305.

he remarks on a bronze life-sized figure of Septimius Severus, as 'showing that sculpture was not universally at the low ebb it is imagined in these times', for 'it is great and in a good taste'.<sup>1</sup> The present writer has not been able to trace the existence of this statue, and does not know whether it was correctly identified or even antique at all. The interest of Gray's deduction rests upon his having thought it so, just as he believed in the authenticity of Ossian.

The only statue of the Renaissance mentioned anywhere in the journals is the 'famous Christ', by Michelangelo, in Santa Maria Sopra Minerva, of

white marble, to which age has given the beautiful hue of the antique; it is standing a little larger than life, and with both arms holding the cross, the reed, and the scourge; the head somewhat inclining to one side, the looks full of mildness and extensive humanity, and an attitude perfectly easy and natural: the marble truly softened into flesh; nothing can be more exquisite than the turn of the limbs: sculpture can go no farther.<sup>2</sup>

Such judicious and clear-sighted praise causes all the more regret that we have no notes on the 'Moses', the 'David', or the New Sacristy of San Lorenzo. It is disappointing also that there is very little about the great Barocco sculptors. A rather contemptuous dismissal of Bernini's 'Adonis' begins 'I do not admire it'.<sup>3</sup> Gray had certainly studied the 'Apollo and Daphne' for he alludes to it as inspired by an antique relief seen by him in the Sacchetti Palace, but that is all he has to say.<sup>4</sup>

## V

At first sight it might seem that to put together a summary of Gray's views about architecture, and assess the share in the Gothic Revival sometimes credited to him on account of his close association with Horace Walpole, ought to be the easiest part of the business of the present essay, as the material is more abundant than elsewhere. In fact it is the most difficult, partly because this material consists more of historical guesswork and bald guide-book description than of critical judgements; and even more because, both with the poet and his friend, there is a problem of what may be called a dualism of ideas.

It might be of assistance in explaining the attitude of Gray's

<sup>1</sup> Mitford, iv. 281.

<sup>2</sup> Ib. 270,

<sup>3</sup> Ib. 282.

<sup>4</sup> Ib. 241.

mind if any of the many writers who have added during the last half-century to the immense literature dealing with Walpole, however well equipped or not in other respects, had been competent or had even tried to analyse their hero's strangely inconsequential position in the face of artistic matters. If his studied reflections on aesthetic standards and achievements were to be collected from the *Sermon on Painting*, the *Aedes Walpolianae*, and the more serious parts of his letters, from the *Description of Strawberry Hill* by its creator, and the editorial observations in the *Anecdotes of Painting*, the accumulation would be a jumble of irreconcilable and logically inconsistent predilections and dislikes. The only applicable clue seems to be that there existed in his brain two elements, a strictly conservative aesthetic orthodoxy of the type accepted at the time, and a more lightly held fancy for innovation if linked with historical, or rather antiquarian sentiment; in short, the rival claims of intrinsic and associated beauty. Most likely Walpole never troubled to debate with himself the difficulty about reconciling the two strains of thought.

But Gray with his far more exactly trained reasoning powers and infinitely more solidly furnished intellect shows that he was conscious of the presence of a problem when he wrote whimsically to Mason on 9 November 1758,

I insist, that Sense is nothing in poetry, but according to the dress she wears, & the scene she appears in. if you should lead me into a superb Gothic building with a thousand cluster'd pillars, each of them half a mile high, the walls all cover'd with fretwork, & the windows full of red & blue Saints, that had neither head nor tail; and I should find the Venus of Medici in person perk'd up in a long nich over the high altar, as naked as ever she was born, do you think it would raise, or damp my devotions?<sup>1</sup>

From the context it is clear that the answer expected was that the perfect intrinsic beauty of the statue would interfere with the religious elevation, largely due to associated ideas, excited by the Gothic building. The concluding paragraphs of Norton Nicholls's *Reminiscences*, treating of the poet's 'love of, & knowledge in Gothic architecture' are disappointingly jejune, but they include the admission that 'he contended particularly for the superiority of its effect in churches'.<sup>2</sup> He even went so far

<sup>1</sup> Toynbee-Whibley, *Correspondence*, ii. 593-4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* iii. 1302.

as to attribute similar feelings about associated beauty to the long-vanished builders of the Romanesque churches in the memorandum printed by Gosse under the grandiose title of an *Essay on Norman Architecture*. 'It may be asked,' he wrote, 'why did they not rather imitate the beautiful remains of a better age, of which many were then in being, as some of them exist to this day? I answer because taste had nothing to do in their choice; because the fabrics erected in the time and for the purposes of Christianity had a nearer connection with their own faith.'<sup>1</sup>

About the time when Gray may be assumed to have been writing this memorandum he was steeping himself in antiquarian pursuits, making a list described in a letter to Wharton of 21 February 1758, of buildings, ruins, parks, gardens, prospects, pictures, and monuments, according to localities, their owners '& what has been the characteristick, & taste of different ages. you will say, this is the object of all Antiquaries, but pray, what Antiquary ever saw these objects in the same light, or desired to know them for a like reason?'<sup>2</sup> Perhaps it was not altogether in jest that, in a letter to the same friend on 2 December of the same year, he said that he had 'left off being a Coxcomb or a Connoisseur' in painting.<sup>3</sup> Indeed as far as regards architecture it is doubtful whether he had ever been one, or whether his attitude to that art, always that of an historian, had only become more exclusively such as the 'confused notion of many strange and fine things' that had swum before his eyes in Italy 'for some time',<sup>4</sup> faded into the past.

After attempting to account for the scantiness of Gray's critical observations on buildings, all that can be done is to indicate where his antiquarian notes on the characteristics of certain styles have been printed. It is tantalizing when we have the many famous and brilliant passages recording emotions stirred in him by natural

<sup>1</sup> Gosse, *Works of Gray*, i. 296. Gosse's date, 1754, is certainly as much as four years too early and may be even more. Many of the examples given are from Peterborough and Ely, and Gray in a letter to Wharton, 18 June 1758 (Toynbee-Whibley, *Correspondence*, ii. 572), mentions that he had lately been 'on a little expedition' to those '& many other old places', apparently for the first time. The well-known letter to Bentham, shown by Toynbee and Whibley (*Correspondence*, ii. 862-6) to date from as late as 1765, expounds substantially the same theories as the memorandum.

<sup>2</sup> Ib. 564.

<sup>3</sup> Ib. 601.

<sup>4</sup> 21 April 1741: Ib. i. 181.

scenery, the vivid discussions on classical topography in the Naples note-book, and separate flashes of intuition like those lighting up C. P. E. Bach's harpsichord pieces, the frescoes in Sant' Andrea della Valle, and Michelangelo's statue of Christ, to find nothing but perfunctory praise of the frieze of the Tomb of Caecilia Metella, the Temple of the Sibyl at Tivoli, and three or four other trite matters. Paestum was outside the range of tourists at that date; Gray was never at Constantinople or even Ravenna; but he must have entered some of the early basilicas in Rome, and have known Saint Mark's at Venice well. He alludes to the Doge's Palace as 'in the Arabesque manner';<sup>1</sup> perhaps if he had done more he might, like de Brosses, have called it 'an ugly fellow, if ever there was one, heavy, sombre and Gothic in the most wretched taste'. It is only possible to hope, somewhat against faith, that the poet's feelings would have saved him from concurring with the *Président*, who thought Saint Mark's was 'low, impenetrable to light and in miserable taste', and that 'with immense riches lavished upon it, it might well in the end have been curious, in spite of the devilish craftsmen who made use of them'.

Nicholls's passage about Gray's views on Anglo-Norman Romanesque, incorporating some ideas of the writer's own, corresponds with the letter to Bentham and the memorandum already quoted. The concluding sentences of the last are worth giving in full. Of the cathedrals in that style he writes:

Upon the whole these huge structures claim not only the veneration due to their great antiquity, but (though far surpassed in beauty by the buildings of the three succeeding centuries) have really a rude kind of majesty, resulting from the loftiness of their naves, the gloom of their ailes, and the hugeness of their massive members, which seem calculated for a long duration.<sup>2</sup>

It would scarcely have pleased the writer if he had been told that his perceptiveness here does not go much deeper than Dr. Johnson's 'rocky solidity and indeterminate duration', said to have been evoked by the nave of Durham. When passing his surprising verdict on the Doge's Palace Gray dismisses the theory, held by Wren amongst others, of the oriental origin of European Gothic.<sup>3</sup> Nicholls says that the poet uttered the unforgettable maxim, 'Call this what you will, but you must allow that it is beautiful',

<sup>1</sup> 18 Sept. 1754: *Ib.* 408.

<sup>2</sup> Gosse, *Works of Gray*, i. 301.

<sup>3</sup> 18 Sept. 1754: Toynbee-Whibley, *Correspondence*, i. 407.

while contemplating a building in that style, and adds that 'he admired the elegance & good taste of many of its ornaments'.<sup>1</sup> Probably only two or three professional architects, if so many, would at that time have been equal to grasping the infinitely greater qualities of daring science and economy of means inherent everywhere in its constructive design. A critic as perspicacious as Sir Osbert Sitwell has made the suggestion that Horace Walpole had not 'developed his Gothic inclinations' at the time of the Italian journey.<sup>2</sup> For reasons already given (p. 71 *supra*) the present writer finds himself able to accede to this view only with certain reservations. For it seems to him that the high-strung emotional mood exhibited by both fellow-travellers during the passage of the Alps and the expedition to the Grande Chartreuse felt by both but unquestionably originating with the greater and finer spirit of the two (for when did the other ever show it again?), contained the germ of the romantic, medievalistic bent. However this may be, it is noteworthy that in their progress across France it was certainly Gray alone who had anything appreciative to say about the Gothic cathedrals. At Amiens, on 1 April 1739, a dry description only applies the word 'beautiful' to the painted windows.<sup>3</sup> But less than three months later the Cathedral at Rheims is 'a vast Gothic building of a surprising beauty and lightness, all covered over with a profusion of little statues and other ornaments'.<sup>4</sup> It was not until his second visit to Paris, a quarter of a century later, that Walpole is found rather casually writing to his antiquarian friend the Rev. William Cole of Amiens and the Sainte Chapelle.

That Gray was not unobservant of the Gothic buildings in Italy is proved by what he says about Santa Maria Sopra Minerva, the only one he mentions, as 'an ancient Gothic structure, none of the nicest in that sort of architecture, but large and rich'.<sup>5</sup>

His most elaborately developed conjectures about the genesis of the First Pointed Style in England, connected with a chapel in the precincts of York Minster, are embodied in his correspondence with Mason, 15 January and 8 February 1763. The ruin had attracted his admiration when visiting the Precentor in the previous year, and Mason, in what Gray, with scarcely concealed

<sup>1</sup> Toynbee-Whibley, *Correspondence*, iii. 1302.

<sup>2</sup> *Sing High! Sing Low!* 1944, p. 32.

<sup>3</sup> Toynbee-Whibley, *Correspondence*, i. 100.   <sup>4</sup> *Ib.* 112.   <sup>5</sup> Mitford, iv. 269.



irony, called a 'very *learned* dissertation',<sup>1</sup> tried to fix its date upon documentary evidence. The poet argued the point on grounds of style. Although on the right tack, and showing a certain anticipation of the processes of 'morphological analysis' remarkable for the time, Gray was not sufficiently acquainted with the underlying historical facts to carry the question much farther than academic discussion. His descriptions of Netley, Kirkstall, and other buildings visited during his summer rambles do not amount to more than sympathetically delineated foreground objects in his incomparable sketches of natural scenery.

Of the architecture of the Renaissance period in England he has nothing whatever to say; and for that and the succeeding Barocco epoch in Italy, there are not as many as half a dozen oddly distributed notes. The longest, and also the most completely colourless, is a sort of inventory of the details of the Pitti Palace,<sup>2</sup> which does not seem to have excited in him even the same boyish astonishment as the garden front of Versailles.<sup>3</sup> At the Roman Capitol he found 'the disposition of the three buildings in a very noble taste'.<sup>4</sup> He writes of the Barberini Palace, 'the architecture is of Bernini; the windows of the principal front arched in the ancient fashion, between the pilasters, which is an advantage to it and gives it a French air'.<sup>5</sup> As might be expected of a cultivated native of England, where the pure Palladian tradition, first imported by Inigo Jones, had always held its own, he instinctively misdoubted the Barocco. The 'front lately added' to the Church of San Carlo al Corso was, he thought, 'handsome enough, but that the pediment seems unnecessarily broken into too many parts';<sup>6</sup> while the 'Palaces, Churches, & publick buildings', at Naples, were in general, 'large & grand enough, but commonly of a very ill taste in Architecture charged with abundance of clumsy Ornaments'.<sup>7</sup>

Strawberry Hill, as the creation and favourite residence of a lifelong friend, certainly held an important and pleasant position in Gray's life and thoughts, and it is impossible in exploring his opinions about art to shirk an effort to discover

<sup>1</sup> Toynbee-Whibley, *Correspondence*, ii. 795.

<sup>2</sup> *Gray and his Friends*, pp. 216-18.

<sup>3</sup> 22 May 1739: Toynbee-Whibley, *Correspondence*, i. 107-8.

<sup>4</sup> Mitford, iv. 299.

<sup>5</sup> *Ib.* 272.

<sup>6</sup> *Ib.* 269.

<sup>7</sup> *Gray and his Friends*, p. 231.

what he really thought about the building; how far he accepted it as a serious attempt at revocation of the past, or simply as an appropriate setting for a romantic antiquarian and his treasury of interesting or pretty oddments. To the writer of these lines, probably to most of his readers, and to countless people who have never perhaps set eyes on Walpole's castle, there are few spots in England more fully charged with captivating and intimate associations, which may be called literary, personal, social, and in a sense artistic. These must be stripped away if it is to be appraised as architecture. As such the present writer has to confess that it seems to him at best a curious and entertaining trifle, at worst an intellectually poverty-stricken monstrosity. Considered as reproductions of medieval originals the details could scarcely be more meanly and ignorantly carried out. Unless one reflects that the craftsmen who worked for Wyatt and the Adams were mostly Italians, and consequently consummately skilful, and the men employed by Walpole scarcely of the capacity of village joiners, it is difficult to account for their clumsiness. For the Pompeian and other classic details fashioned by one set of men trained under Rococo decorators like the Cuviliés and Meissonier must have been as new and unfamiliar to them as the Gothic to the others. When Gray first wrote that he was glad that Wharton entered 'into the Spirit of Strawberry Castle', which had 'a purity and propriety of Gothicism in it (with very few exceptions) that I have not seen elsewhere',<sup>1</sup> only the staircase and a few small rooms were in occupation. The library, one of the show-pieces, was in course of erection. Later on, according to Nicholls, 'when Mr. Walpole added the gallery [in 1763] with its gilding and [looking] glass', the poet decided that 'he had degenerated into finery'.<sup>2</sup> As a test case we may take his verdict on the Holbein Chamber when just completed, also given in a letter to Wharton. There is no need to quote the description; robbed of upholstery and knick-knacks the structural features are still in place; the papier-mâché Flamboyant screen, messed-up (there is really no other word) by Richard Bentley from some engraving of Rouen; the geometrical ceiling imitated from a room in Windsor Castle; and the chimney-piece misadapted from a late Perpendicular tomb at Canterbury.

<sup>1</sup> 18 Sept. 1754: Toynbee-Whibley, *Correspondence*, i. 407.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* iii. 1302.

Yet the whole was, so Gray thought, 'in the best taste of anything he [Walpole] has yet done, & in your own [Wharton's] Gothic way'.<sup>1</sup> The qualifications are such that it may be hoped that Gray's admiration for this hotch-potch did not go very deep; indeed it is incredible that he can have accepted it as claiming to be either an accurate reconstruction of a medieval apartment or an independent work of art.<sup>2</sup>

In the house at Old Park, Durham, inherited and occupied by Wharton in 1759, Gray may almost be said to have had a modest Strawberry Hill of his own. It is to be noted that five years earlier, when the Doctor was first settling in the City of London, he had already felt the attractions of the rising fashion and was thinking of giving his house 'some Gothic ornaments'. Evidently these experiments in medievalism were then generally regarded as only suitable for domestic consumption, for Gray advises, 'if you project anything, I hope it will be entirely within doors: & don't let me (when I come gaping into Coleman Street) be directed to the Gentleman's at the ten Pinnacles, or with the Church porch at his door'.<sup>3</sup> The letter preceding this contains, in reply to one of Wharton's no longer extant, the reflections on the use of revived Gothic by William Kent and Batty Langley cited in most books on the movement. When Wharton settled at Old Park and proceeded to gothicize it, appealing to his friend for assistance over stained glass and wall-papers, the poet was eager with advice and active help. His letters are classic sources for the history of English internal decoration, the subject of so many publications in recent years.<sup>4</sup>

## VI

If the last-named subject has become a matter of common discussion in numerous books and periodicals dedicated to it, this is even more the case with gardening. Since the appearance of Reginald Blomfield and Inigo Thomas's *Formal Garden in England*, in 1892—an epoch-marking book if ever that over-

<sup>1</sup> 18 Sept. 1759: *ib.* ii. 641.

<sup>2</sup> Admirable photographs of this and other parts of the place are to be found in *Country Life*, vol. lvi, 5 and 12 July 1924.

<sup>3</sup> 18 Sept. 1754: Toynbee-Whibley, *Correspondence*, i. 406.

<sup>4</sup> 28 Nov. 1759, 9 May, 22 Oct., and 13 Nov. 1761: *Ib.* ii. 650-1, 736, 761-2, and 765.

worked phrase was deserved—the reaction against the cult of landscape-gardening, a vogue applauded by Gray and Walpole in its infancy, has taken great strides, and even the most whole-hearted devotees of Victorian standards of taste can scarcely deny that it was high time. So deliberately has the controversy been threshed out, that, were it not that Temple, as we have seen earlier, reckoned gardening as one of the arts in which Gray possessed a fine taste, and therefore to mention it seems obligatory to round off our survey, it might seem otiose to reproduce a couple of passages by now sufficiently hackneyed. The first is from the correspondence with How and Count Algarotti. After reading a presentation copy of one of the Count's books, Gray wrote to How, 'there is one little point, in w<sup>ch</sup> he does not do us [the English] justice. I am the more solicitous about it, because it relates to the only Taste we can call our own, the only proof of our original talent in matter of pleasure; I mean our skill in gardening & laying out grounds.' He then mentions the Chinese as our reputed rivals, but adds: 'it is very certain, we copied nothing from them, nor had anything but nature for our model. it is not forty years, since the Art was born among us; and it is sure we had then no information on this head from China at all.'<sup>1</sup> Two months later How sends an excerpt from a letter from Algarotti showing that he had changed his views in accordance with Gray's suggestion. The second quotation is from a playful letter to Nicholls. 'And so you have a garden of your own, & you plant and transplant & are dirty & amused!', he exclaims, 'why I have no such thing, you monster; nor ever shall be dirty or amused as long as I live! my gardens are in the window . . . & they go to bed regularly under the same roof that I do'.<sup>2</sup> It is to be remarked that when it came to the laying out of the grounds at Old Park, Gray, so ready with counsel and assistance inside the house, after deprecating his own skill in such matters urged Wharton to call in Mason, whose belief in his own genius as a painter and musician culminated in his self-confidence as a landscape-gardener.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 10 Sept. 1763: Toynbee-Whibley, *Correspondence*, ii. 814.

<sup>2</sup> 24 June 1769: *Ib.* iii. 1065.

<sup>3</sup> 21 July 1759: *Ib.* ii. 625.

## VII

Gray scarcely came into touch with contemporary art at all. Only during the last decade of his life were public exhibitions beginning to be held in London. They excited much interest in Horace Walpole, as his annotations to catalogues prove, but it was through the universal provider Mason that the poet was brought into a sort of relationship, albeit not a personal one, with an artist occupying later a central position amongst the originators of the Royal Academy. In a letter to Wharton he writes that Paul Sandby, who 'has of late, only, practised in oil', had, incited by Mason, 'cook'd up a great picture of M: Snowdon, in w<sup>ch</sup> the Bard & Edward the first make their appearance; this is to be his *Exhibition Picture* for next year, but (till then) it is a sort of secret'.<sup>1</sup> He mentions the picture again in a letter to Brown a week later.<sup>2</sup> It duly appeared in the exhibition of 1761, and Mason boasted that if it was 'not the best picture that has been painted this century, I'll give up all my taste to the Bench of Bishops'.<sup>3</sup> In spite of this it seems to have vanished into limbo. Mr. William Sandby, who published a valuable work on his ancestors, quotes Gray's letters but evidently knew nothing of the painting itself.<sup>4</sup> Apart from this and passing allusions to views of Derwentwater and Gordale Scar by Thomas Smith of Derby<sup>5</sup> he never mentions British painting.

Reference must be made to the eccentric amateur Richard Bentley, who occupied for a time the storm-rocked berth of Walpole's artistic protégé, on account of that quaint and sometimes greatly overrated book, the *Six Poems* of Gray with his illustrations, 'cook'd up' by Walpole in 1752, not at all to the author's entire delectation. In return he certainly paid the artist a superb compliment in verse, so magniloquent in fact that its complete sincerity may perhaps be suspect. Gray also politely told Walpole that the engraving of one of the tailpieces surprised him as far surpassing his 'idea of London graving'. But, he adds, 'the Drawing itself was so finished, that I suppose it did not require all the art I had imagined to copy it tolerably'.<sup>6</sup> London engraving it was in fact only in a strictly limited sense;

<sup>1</sup> 21 Oct. 1760: Ib. 705.<sup>2</sup> Ib. 706.<sup>3</sup> Ib. 705, note 16.<sup>4</sup> *Thomas and Paul Sandby*, 1892, p. 151.<sup>5</sup> Letters to Wharton, 4 and 12 Oct. 1769: Toynbee-Whibley, *Correspondence*, iii. 1089, 1107.<sup>6</sup> 8 July 1752: Ib. i. 362-3.

for it was the work of Charles Grignion, French by extraction and wholly Parisian by training. Gray can scarcely have forgotten this book when he wrote to How that, if in a suggested English edition of Algarotti's works 'you propose any Vignettes or other matters of ornament, it would be well they were design'd in Italy, & the gravings executed either there or in France, for in this country they are woeful & beyond measure dear'.<sup>1</sup> With the 'fine taste in prints', attributed to him by Temple, he was well able to recognize the superiority of the exquisite Parisian illustrated books to a barbaric, amateurish curiosity like the *Six Poems*.<sup>2</sup> Bentley later designed some illustrations to the *Bard*, but they were not engraved and the poet admits that he had never even seen them.<sup>3</sup>

Finally Gray's own drawings must be briefly noticed. They are restricted to neatly executed pen and ink sketches of natural history specimens on interleaves bound up with a copy of Linnaeus's *Systema Naturae*. The history of these volumes, with a detailed account of the annotations and illustrations, accompanied by selected facsimiles, is to be found in a charming little book by Professor Charles Eliot Norton to whom the originals at one time belonged.<sup>4</sup> They are now by his bequest in the Library of Harvard University. Careful examination would be needed if light is to be thrown on the question whether all the sketches were made from nature, either from preserved specimens in the British Museum or elsewhere (the Leverian Museum, haunted by Gilbert White, was not opened in London in Gray's lifetime) or living ones procured for Gray.<sup>5</sup> Some representing very rare species conceivably may have been copied from book-illustrations. Judging from

<sup>1</sup> Nov. 1763: Toynbee-Whibley, *Correspondence*, ii. 827.

<sup>2</sup> It must be noted, however, that the *Six Poems* was earlier by some years than the famous French illustrated books produced at the instance of the poet C-J. Dorat with the co-operation of the artist Charles Eisen and his associates. In the *Correspondance Littéraire* of Grimm and Diderot this style of publication is mentioned (1<sup>er</sup> Mai 1766) as 'introduit depuis très peu de temps', and (15<sup>me</sup> Janvier 1767) as 'un fureur' to be deprecated, strangely enough, in comparison with the simple perfection of coeval English typography undisfigured by 'mauvaises images'.

<sup>3</sup> 27 Aug. 1756: Toynbee-Whibley, *Correspondence*, ii. 476.

<sup>4</sup> *The Poet Gray as a Naturalist*, Boston, 1903.

<sup>5</sup> There are records in his letters of his having received a few: Nov. 1769; 14 Sept. 1770; Jan.-Feb. 1771?: Toynbee-Whibley, *Correspondence*, iii. 1090, 1146, 1163.

the beautiful facsimiles given by Professor Eliot Norton it would be hyper-enthusiasm to say that the drawings, however interesting and precious as the poet's handiwork, show any pronounced artistic qualities. His rough outline view of the Manor House at Stoke Poges, from which the vignette illustrating the 'Long Story' in the *Six Poems* was confected, is a mere diagram.<sup>1</sup>

C. F. BELL

<sup>1</sup> It is reproduced in Toynbee-Whibley, *Correspondence*, vol. i, facing p. 363.

## NATURALISTS

AS the English country-side shrinks and, alas, blisters, the company of naturalists nevertheless continues to increase and, more surprisingly, the number of those who wish to hear about the country scene. So it has come about that a greater number of books on rural England and its denizens is demanded and therefore produced. Such books become legion; and a very large and surprising proportion of them are true, not only to their subject but to literary art. Some of those who have had a rough upbringing or at least have had no particular concern with letters have produced at the first tentative sally pages and chapters, if not complete volumes, of first-class quality as prose. Richard Jefferies, who must be accepted as the founder of the modern cult, was the first of this class; and there are some critics who hold that his earliest books—about poachers and gamekeepers and such unsentimental characters—are his best. However that may be it is worth while perhaps before discussing the work and words of particular naturalists, past or present, to suggest a reason or two why naturalists or lovers of ‘the royal aspects of the earth’—in the phrase of that able botanist, Lord de Tabley—*ought* to write well: they have certain advantages belonging to their trade.

More essentially perhaps than is always understood, descriptive writing is the direct harvest of the eye. There are, of course, superficial exceptions, some of them unexpected. Blackmore imagined the greater part of the landscape of *Lorna Doone*, and Shelley is said to have owed some of the rhetorical splendour of the scenery of *Alastor* to a Spanish novelist; but even in such examples the eye, though at second hand or by inference, supplied the zest. Now very many naturalists, especially in the subject of bird-watching, have been drawn into their pursuit solely by the possession of exceptional powers of vision and of other senses in lesser degree. W. H. Hudson, for example, had a very rare gift of hearing. He was so sensitive to tone and interval rather than tune that he could not help distinguishing the song or notes of any bird he heard; and the music, so to call it, so pleasingly affected him that he could recollect it distinctly after the interval of a generation or so. He remembered, too, in himself the superior



acuity of his sense of hearing as a child. A love of natural history is usually felt from very early days; and it is my experience that those—and they are many—who desire and strive to become naturalists later in life fail altogether to touch the higher accomplishment or higher ecstasy, if such a word be allowed in this reference, that quite often has taken possession of those who have been naturalists from childhood. Just as an illustration of the sharpness of sense in children, I may be allowed to interpolate one small example. The young son of a bee-keeper, who at the moment had his back to the hive where his father was busy, said casually: ‘Why, daddy, you’ve been stung!’ He was quite right and he knew, because he smelt the poison. There was no doubt about it. The association of sense-sensitiveness with love of natural history has been demonstrated, at least in my experience, in numbers of acquaintances whose skill in their subject has not been known to the general public. The late Lord Northcliffe, for example, was acutely interested in birds, and knew of every nest within the circle of his many acres of garden. He peculiarly enjoyed fishing, at which he was an expert, and the life of the river. Now he possessed a pair of eyes and ears that were unbelievably super-excellent. He could read a small print notice in a shop window as his motor-car galloped past. He could isolate any conversation at a dinner table where two dozen guests were all talking together. So endowed he could not but enjoy detecting the nest of a nettlecreeper in his garden or marking the prevalence of a black gnat on the Kennet. It was the real tragedy of his life, though no biographer has taken the point, that his abnormally long sight was daily focused on the scores of newspapers which he skimmed each morning before breakfast. A good naturalist was lost in him; but at any rate it is due to his credit that he insisted on natural history being represented in his newspapers, even the most urban. For example, Henry Williamson, one of the better known of our present writers on natural history, was one of the earliest writers engaged to contribute daily notes on natural history in the *Evening News*, a paper that Northcliffe himself said was to be essentially a London paper, concentrating on Cockney interests. Again, how greatly he delighted in Anthony Collett’s weekly articles in *The Times*, and in the fishing articles of George Dewar.

The senses, as it seems to me, influence the style of a great

many writers in both prose and verse. More than this, I would suggest that because of the superior senses and the pleasure inspired by their exercise, most naturalists excel in descriptive writing. Style in short depends very much more intimately than the critics have allowed on the acuity of the organs of sense. Doubtless a blind man can write as well as the best seer. Milton is the most obvious example. Style must of course depend in part on a love of words and a study of words for their own sake. Milton was a great poet, a great prose-writer because he had a large brain, and was a student of language and possessed an ear for rhythm. His loveliest passages tell the source of his style, as in Eve's speech in the fourth book of *Paradise Lost*:

With thee conversing I forget all time,  
All seasons and their change, all please alike;  
Sweet is the breath of morn, her rising sweet,  
With charm of earliest birds.

Let no one deny the beauty of the lines; but you could argue from them the source of their style. The poet is unspecific, and his 'charm' of birds depends not, like Lord Grey's, on a knowledge of the individual songs, but on the realization that derivatively 'charm' is the same word as 'chaunt'. If Milton's list of flowers in *Lycidas* is compared with Shakespeare's in *A Winter's Tale* it becomes clear enough that Shakespeare's owes its superiority to the senses of the author, while certain signs of artificiality peep out from Milton's and damage its virtue. He has no picture of 'the rathe primrose' before him, while the daffodil nods its shapely head at Shakespeare by the edges of Arden in the first week of April or so, just before the swallow is expected. It is not only the mourning subject in Milton, it is the want of country eyes that gives the suggestion of artificiality to any naturalist who reads Milton's list of mixed wild flowers and tame and of confused seasons. Ophelia was yet sadder than the friend of *Lycidas*; and her talk of flowers is perfect, though not comparable with Perdita's tally:

There's fennel for you, and columbines; there's rue for you; and here's some for me: we may call it herb of grace o' Sundays: O, you must wear your rue with a difference. There's a daisy: I would give you some violets, but they all withered when my father died.

The rumour must, I think, be true that the young Shakespeare was a poacher, for most poachers, as most gamekeepers, are drawn

into their profession (as definite experience tells me) in some measure at any rate by the pleasure of exercising their keen senses; and as a rule they are good, if not learned naturalists. Incidentally the most persistent poacher of my acquaintance has a peculiar gift of night vision.

How Jefferies enjoyed his early days as half poacher, half game-keeper's friend; and did not Henry Williamson, among present naturalists, keep the wolf from the door at one period by accepting leave to hunt as payment for agricultural services? Even Wordsworth, though he never attained to any great knowledge in any form of natural history, was tempted by his powers of observation as a boy to snare woodcock, and even, alas, to rob the snares of other boys.

Perhaps the most accurate of all the poets when he touches on any point of natural history was Tennyson; but his shortness of sight goes to the very root of his style. He peered from close to at little things, especially at buds on trees, and late in life lamented that he had not when young the advantage of inspecting the stuffed birds at the South Kensington Museum! One of his superior qualities in comparison with other poets is his attribute of quotability; and he is quotable largely because his eyes were rather microscopic than telescopic and thus inclined him to short, highly perfected phrases. The line that Mrs. Gaskell in *Cranford* helped to make famous, 'more black than ashbuds in the front of March' (though half the line is from Shakespeare), is the observation of a peerer, and so are his references to the ruby buds of the lime and the 'rosy plumelets' tufting the larch. He focused on a small point. It may be that his much-quoted epigram on the little flower in the crannies was a symbol of the way of his own poetic philosophy. However unlike Blake in other respects, like Blake he found his infinity in a grain of sand. In less kindly vein one may say of him that he regarded flowers and birds and other denizens of the natural scene as a sort of vocabulary of quotations, immensely useful for decorating the poet's theme. He pulled out the small cameos with great selective skill on all sorts of occasions. The lovely lady's nose is 'tip-tilted like the petals of a flower' and eyes resemble in their large rotundity those of an eagle-owl, a bird he can have seen only in a cage or stuffed in a case. It would, of course, be foolish to deny to Tennyson the larger imagination. The Chorus of the *Lotus Eaters* is proof enough of his genius;

but in general as compared with the so-called nature poets or with the more emotional writers on natural history, his prevailing habit was to put in his thumb and pull out a plum and say what a good boy am I.

A perfect contrast in attitude of mind may be found in Tennyson's regret for his late acquaintance with the glass cases of South Kensington and W. H. Hudson's beautiful introduction to *Birds and Man*. Quoting from an earlier essay, he says: 'When the eye closes in death, the bird, except to the naturalist, becomes a mere bundle of dead feathers; crystal globes may be put into the empty sockets, and a bold life-imitating attitude given to the stuffed specimen; but the vitreous orb shoots forth no life-like glances: the "passion and the fire whose fountains are within" have vanished, and the best works of the taxidermist, who has given a life to his bastard art, produce in the mind only sensations of irritation and disgust.' Later against his habit he visited the famous and much-visited Brighton Museum and found that 'it was painfully disappointing, for though no actual pleasure was expected, the distress experienced was more than I had bargained for'. The contrast with a memory of the Dartford Warbler seen in its native haunts especially saddened him. After a lovely description of a particular bird, 'the long tail raised, crest erect, crimson eye sparkling and throat puffed out with his little scolding notes', he wrote: 'It is unlikely that I shall ever again see the furze wren in this aspect, with a curious splendour wrought by the sunlight in the dark but semi-translucent delicate feathers of his mantle; but its image is in the mind, and, with a thousand others equally beautiful, remains to me a permanent possession.' That was his *κτῆμα ἐς αἰεί*. The eye again was the fount and origin of the memory and the style. Every phrase and sentence is of the eye, ocular.

Such crowded memories make the irremovable background of the mind in most of those who have been endowed with fine senses, especially of the eye, and have rejoiced above others in the country scene. Hudson had all the qualities in high measure: good eyes, marvellous ears, physical capacity, and controlled emotions.

Joy in the use of the senses in presence of a world full of beauty reached such a pitch in some of our naturalists that they were at rare intervals overcome, like the Delphic priestess, with the divine afflatus. They experienced an almost religious 'conversion', in the Salvation Army sense of the word. The difference between

Hudson and Jefferies, who hold a certain supremacy (they lie fitly side by side in the same Sussex churchyard), is that Hudson was kept warm by his sensuous emotion, Jefferies was burnt up by it. There was a certain morbidity in his great frame. He died young (but because the gods loved him). Hudson, in spite of many maladies, lived into a good old age that enabled him to see the victory so long denied to him. It has been said that every poet must make his own public: Hudson did that, after long frustration. He was master both of himself and his manner of expressing himself. A good classic whom on one occasion I persuaded to read a few pages of Jefferies's *Pageant of Summer* had one comment only: 'How desperately badly written!' What he would have said of *The Story of my Heart* I tremble to think. There is a certain degree of superficial justification for his criticism. But style is not an affair only of the *mot juste* or of balance and rhythm or even of good grammar. Jefferies had at least moods of genius. When you have read him and seen with his eyes the place whereon we stand (whereon we 'stand and stare') is thenceforth holier ground. The emotions which his senses stirred in him survive through his struggle to express them, and he struggled in vain for years (like Mr. Blunden after the last war) to compose so much as a sentence. Then at last the inspiration came over him in a flood; and *The Story of my Heart* was written. If sometimes it is wild, mysterious, and almost as incomprehensible as the prophecies of a Delphic or Sibylline priestess it affects us beyond other utterances, and we grow aware of a half-mystic communion that altogether 'transcends our wonted theme'. He becomes in this regard the peer of Vaughan, the Silurist. Both of them perhaps evince in their style their difficulty in harnessing the emotional thought to adequate language. So *The Story of my Heart* is mad moonshine to some readers, is clear genius to others. It is less obscure than, for example, Blake's prophetic books; but in each writer it is difficult to arbitrate:

In the light of what they dreamed  
They spent their working day,

and dreams can seldom be analysed. Jefferies records how he came by his dreams, so to call them:

I found them in the grass fields, under the trees, on the hill-tops,  
at sunrise and in the night. There was a deeper meaning every-  
where: . . . I was sensitive to all things, to the earth under, and

the star-hollow round about; to the least blade of grass, to the largest oak. *They seemed like exterior nerves and veins for the conveyance of feeling to me.*

The sentence which I have italicized, whatever its vagueness, is successful in at least suggesting the mood that comes over a great many people whose senses have tingled with the mere, the sheer pleasure of observing; and from time to time this ecstasy must find its way into what they write.

Hudson had a clearer vision through a like experience. There is a passage in *Far Away and Long Ago* that tells the whole tale. When he was about sixteen years old he was given a copy of White's *Selborne*; and it exercised, at one remove, a strange influence, for that lovely classic is in essence almost pedestrian, matter of fact, scientific, though the joy of the senses bursts through continually in spite of the old don in the naturalist. This is the Hudson passage, a *locus classicus*:

I read and re-read it many times, for nothing so good of its kind had ever come to me, but it did not reveal to me the secret of my own feeling for nature—the feeling of which I was becoming more and more conscious, which was a mystery to me, especially at certain moments, when it would come upon me with a sudden rush. So powerful it was, so unaccountable, I was actually afraid of it, yet I would go out of my way to seek it. At the hour of sunset I would go out half a mile or so from the house, and sitting on the dry grass with hands clasped round my knees, gaze at the Western sky waiting for it to take me. And I would ask myself ‘What does it mean?’

He found the answer in (of all strange books) Brown's *Philosophy* and such like works. ‘What I found in their words was sufficient to show me that the feeling of delight in Nature was an enduring one, that others had known it and that it had been a secret source of happiness throughout their lives.’ It was doubtless because he found it in the highest measure in Jefferies that he desired to be buried beside him in the same churchyard. Behind the clear purity, the honest truth of his manner of describing what he saw lies the sense of this half-mystic passion, which for him ‘did make a sunshine in a shady place’ while it enveloped in a rather obscuring halo many of the finest utterances of Richard Jefferies. But he too was a seer, in the more rudimentary sense; and on this head has been well praised by Henry Williamson,

whose great gifts have been a little obscured not by mysticism but by a sort of self-conscious intolerance. The passage is as follows; and I came upon it accidentally while writing this essay. 'Like all men of genius, Jefferies had extraordinary sight and his sight was his style returning from his memory into words. He saw things as the sun sees them: plain.' That 'all' is of course absurd; but the point is well made in spite of exaggerations; as is the conclusion that much education may blunt the senses and superimpose group ideas. Was it not some English biographer of Rodin who lamented that modern youth, hearing a boat mentioned, had a picture not of the bluff prow (which evoked a paean of admiration from Ruskin) but only the letters B.O.A.T. Writers on natural history have repeated old errors, have indulged in dishonest decoration, and committed other offences both against England and America. Did not the greatest of American writers on natural history persuade the President himself to megaphone a campaign against the large company of 'nature fakers'? Naturalists have often written ill and falsely: but it is significant that the most notorious of the fakers pilloried by Burroughes had peculiarly bad sight.

Among natural historians Gilbert White does not abide our question. Selborne, with its Hanger, held him so closely that he became a Dryad in spite of his placidity. The river Lea did much the same for Isaak Walton.

As you read the domestic, parochial, unsentimental records of Gilbert White you come upon passages which glow, which almost flame, with the pleasure of seeing, just seeing, even when he was chasing scientific discoveries. 'The deep power of joy' influenced him in his kind not less than Wordsworth. Though White was no poet in any sense of the word, he built the background of the best English poetry more successfully than Crabbe or Goldsmith or even Cowper. He saw 'majestic' mountains in the South Downs with a more persuasive vision than Tennyson saw God and man in the crannied flower. The grasshopper warbler means as much to his readers as the lesser celandine to Wordsworthians, because of the joy that shines from the first sight of it.

Nothing can be more amusing than the whisper of this little bird, which seems so close though at a hundred yards' distance; and when close at your ear, is scarce any louder than when a great way off. Had I not been a little acquainted with insects, I should hardly

have believed but that it had been a *Locasta* whispering in the bushes. . . . I was obliged to get a person to go to the other side of the hedge where it haunted, and then it would run, creeping like a mouse, before us for a hundred yards together, through the bottom of the thorns; yet it would not come into fair sight; but in a morning early, and when undisturbed, it sings on the top of a twig, gaping and shivering with its wings.

That is the way to write descriptive English, to paint an abiding picture. It is not often enough remembered that Warde Fowler, that great Virgilian, did for Kingham what White did for Selborne and achieved much of White's virtue. His stories of the birds have seldom been equalled in that class of literature. England is a small country, dimpled not crevassed, a country of brooks, not rivers, of spinneys and hedges, not forests and woods, of paddocks, not expanses, of commons, not prairies; yet at the same time its variety is Cleopatra-like. As the German historian noted, it has produced naturalists who have been subdued to that they worked in, and have achieved a quality peculiar to themselves, like some of the poets. A contrast between the English and the non-English writer on natural history may be found in Maeterlinck's and Tickner Edwardes's tales of the honey-bee. To the engrooved Englishman the pleasant, truthful, joyful account of the life and lore of the hive by English Edwardes is far superior to the spurred gallop of Maeterlinck's literary ecstasies, excessive in regard to the insect; to become absurd to the point of falsity when later he grew emotional over flowers. Both White and Hudson touched the heights, because they dealt first with the harvest of the eye. What emotional or scientific results might ensue takes second place. First enjoy, is the cardinal rule.

It may be said generally of the tribe of observers who find a more than normal delight in more than normally acute sight or hearing that thinking is itself a sort of sense. Hazlitt had to struggle with conscious pain year after year before he could translate his precious ideas on the disinterestedness of the human mind into understandable sentences. Charles Darwin wrote less and less easily and well as he observed less and thought more. The *Naturalist's Notebook* is the best Darwin, and the *Origin of Species* which arose from his younger observations much finer as literature than the *Ascent of Man*. Richard Jefferies wrote easily and happily in his salad days at the first attempt. He



struggled as painfully as Hazlitt for even a longer period when he wanted to do into English metaphysical abstractions arising from his early joys. Beauty of expression may be born in full panoply out of murmuring sound or rippling sight. The style after which a Hazlitt or such a 'sedulous ape' as Stevenson strive with conscious labour in the sequel may reach a higher perfection; but it is a different sort of style, as music and the songs of birds have little in common.

The style is the man, we are told. This is wholly untrue, say, of such a 'sedulous ape' as Stevenson said he was, but it at least touches the truth in regard to most naturalists who attempt literary expression. Their descriptions are not so much translations of ideas as examples of a sort of reflex action: the eyes give the words without intervening medium. It might indeed improve their work, at any rate as literature, if some of our younger naturalists would think more greatly of their senses and less of their theories.

The development of the present, if it is not retrogression, is towards the art of killing joy by the pursuit of science. That most promising of young naturalists, R. Lack, makes complete censuses of the population of a district, cages some birds, stuffs others, and compounds a score of ingenious devices by which the ways of instinct may be discovered. He converts garden and field and hedge into a laboratory and desk. His school is multiplying, and many a good naturalist is thereby being spoilt and the charm of his writing destroyed.

Doubtless the field naturalist also has his defects. Edmund Selous, for example, who had altogether exceptional gifts of eyesight, has confused his records by excess of detail and irritating theories of punctuation. The comma is as interesting to him as the bird. Some of those who strive most gallantly to breathe a country air into urban newspapers are led into ludicrously sentimental rhetoric, even within the confines of a paragraph. But when all exceptions are reckoned, the number of naturalists who to-day write books that would have pleased, say, Isaak Walton, Gilbert White, or W. H. Hudson is very large. The claim that eyes are the secret of style was never more persuasively maintained than among present authors.

Writers on natural history, past and present, almost to a man, confine themselves to prose. Perhaps unexpectedly, very few

good poets have been good naturalists, and very few good naturalists have attempted poetry. The generalization may be ventured that verse written *ad hoc* very seldom reaches the level of poetry, and is often inordinately bad. Many pitiful examples are to be found; for example, in the learned and else delightful old-fashioned book by Anne Pratt. The prose of it dates a little and is too feminine, but it remains a book very difficult to supplant. Unfortunately in an excess of sentimentality the kindly author persuaded a friend to write verses to the honour of this plant and that; and he rhymed away with no little rhetorical fluency. His verses are quite unreadable: they disfigure the pages of good workaday prose. Gilbert White himself is not very much better. He seldom wrote any prose passage of description from which did not peep out some quality of delight, capable of exciting pleasure in the reader. On the few occasions when he attempted to put his observations into the harness of rhyme and rhythm his manner and style are altogether flattened out. The joy evoked in watching detail produces a mode of expression that has no affinity with the words or the form intrinsic to poetic inspiration. The sights and sounds dear to the naturalist may give the poet his most ideal background, but when he tries to introduce into his field of observation some alien application or symbol he usually fails. Something essential to great poetry is lacking, even in the worthy efforts of the Youngs, the Thompsons, and the Cowpers to record in verse the events of the several seasons of the year. Of course the song of the lark or nightingale or the ripples of a sea of daffodils may inspire a mood proper to the higher poetry, but the naturalist is not the most likely person to be so influenced. Perhaps the ghost of Wordsworth was not greatly displeased when he saw in the plaque to his memory a poppy wrongly substituted for a ranunculus: a greater for a lesser celandine. His thoughts on the bleached petals were beyond the sphere of botanical classification. The poet is never a poet because he is a naturalist. On the other hand, the prose writer may acquire gifts of style due in the first place to the joyful exercise of acute perceptions in the sphere of natural history.

There are some exceptions. Indeed, there always are exceptions to any generalization. Lord de Tabley was an expert botanist, and few people, I fancy, have given him enough credit as a poet. He was led into poetry by his interest in the environment about

Tabley Mere as surely as Mr. Coward, may I conjecture?, was made naturalist by the rich scenes of the same neighbourhood. Crabbe of course was a good botanist, but he learnt botany not from any love of plants and flowers, such as Chaucer's or Shakespeare's, but because he had a doctor's training; and to-day, as in the eighteenth century, very many of the best botanists and naturalists—as for example Dr. Wright of Braunton—are found in the medical profession. His references to plants are often like his accounts of the poor, as gloomy as they are accurate. Nature was not to him as it was to Keats

an aeternal book

Whence I may copy many a lovely saying  
About the leaves and flowers,

but rather

Rank weeds that every art and care defy  
Reign o'er the land and rob the blighted rye:  
There thistles stretch their prickly arms afar,  
And to the ragged infant threaten war;  
There poppies nodding mock the hope of toil.  
There the thin bugloss paints the sterile soil;  
Hardy and high above the slender sheaf,  
The slimy mallow waves her silky leaf.  
O'er the young shoot the charlock throws a shade,  
And clasping tares cling round the sickly blade.

Matthew Arnold (though he made a howler over the colour of the wild convolvulus) may be put second in the list of botanico-poets. He took as much trouble as Tennyson to learn his flowers and was more successful in blending them with the beauty of the landscape.

There is one modern poet on whose behalf most naturalists, especially if they are ornithologists, will feel inclined to make claims that may seem extravagant to urban critics. Personally I cannot forbear the verdict that he is the best of the poets of his date. His gifts of eye, and more remarkably of ear, filled him with an ecstasy that led directly to a sense of pity; and both in description, especially of bird's song, and in his humanitarian emotions he came near to an equality with the very best singers in our literature. The place of a poet doubtless depends in no small degree on the bulk of his work. Montrose, Lovelace, Wolfe are not to be put in the first, or even the second class. They are

neither Shelleys nor Francis Thompsons; but with this qualification naturalists would perhaps unite in raising Ralph Hodgson to a height that may seem to some ludicrously exalted. Two pitiful pleas for hunted or tortured beasts are given prominence in many anthologies. There is something of Blake in his hope that people and parsons would kneel

with angry prayers  
For tamed and shabby tigers  
And dancing dogs and bears  
And wretched, blind pit ponies  
And little hunted hares,

and perhaps the necessary brevity of the anthology has helped to hinder appreciation of other less quotable poems. For myself I know no better description of the mood of a summer night, except in Keats's nightingale, than his *The Sedge Warbler*. Maybe it is too reminiscent of other greater poets; but their authentic mantle is on his shoulders:

In early summer moonlight I have strayed  
Down pass and wildway of the wooded hill  
With wonder, as again the sedge bird made  
His old, old ballad new beside the mill.  
And I have stolen closer to the song  
That lisped low, would swell and change to shrill,  
Thick, chattered cheeps that seemed not to belong  
Of right to their elfin throat that threw  
Them on the stream.

Some will feel that you must have so heard a sedge-warbler before you can grant to this night-singer its apostolic succession to Keats's nightingale; but no particular acquaintance with natural history is required for appreciation of that more ambitious poem *The Song of Honour*. It is full of birds—of rooks and 'the nightingale and babble wren'—but any lover of real poetry must surely agree with the naturalist's view that it 'beacons from the abode where the immortals are'. It crystallizes all the best of *The Story of my Heart*, that marvellous essay in mysticism, which never quite found the expressiveness it sought.

It is, I think, a lamentable omission in many biographers that they say nothing of their hero's senses; and the critics are often obnoxious to the same charge. It has long seemed to me probable that Byron was colour-blind (as in some measure, they tell us, is

about one man in twelve, though not one woman in a hundred). He said proudly of himself, with full justification, that his strength lay in description; but in these bright rhetorical stanzas one misses again and again the particular colour attributes. Vague and conventional colour words occur frequently enough: eyes and the sea are blue, and blood and a bull's eyes are red; but his commonest colour used is white in some form, and frequently in a scene that should have danced with colour, we are given such lines as

In costly sheen and gaudy cloak arrayed  
or, in the previous stanza,

Rich are their scarfs, their chargers featly prance.

It was indeed a surprising feat to describe the scene of a Spanish bullfight without the use of any specific colours. Byron was of course temperamentally and intellectually averse from the Lake poets and the so-called nature poets; but why did he reserve his scorn in regard to Coleridge for those most accurate lines in the *Dejection Ode*,

All this long eve so balmy and serene,  
Have I been gazing on the Western sky  
And its peculiar tint of yellow green,

and again in the same ode,

though I should gaze for ever  
On that green light that lingers in the West?

The truth of Coleridge's sensations of light is of course quite beyond cavil.

Human senses are, to be sure, poor things compared with the senses of many other animals. We cannot see like an eagle, smell like a dog or a butterfly, or hear like a red deer, or feel electrical influences like migrating birds; but our senses matter supremely nevertheless; and even relatively to birds, the lesser mammals, and to insects we probably possess, so to say, more catholic senses. A dog's sense of smell, for example, is probably acute only in relation to animal smells. He has no perception of a distant field of beans, and the flowering of the honeysuckle is of no concern. Our lesser senses are more catholic and variable. You may often detect the influence of their master sense in the works of many writers and may get a truer measure of their worth from

the knowledge. Chaucer and Shakespeare must have possessed all the senses in high power. Shelley was long-sighted. Matthew Arnold had a nose. Good poetry, however, depends less on the senses than good prose; and there is much truth in the standard anecdote of the French poet. His painter friend, who fancied himself also as a poet, lamented one day that, though he was full of ideas, he could not write a line. 'Of course not,' retorted the poet in effect, 'poetry has to do with words, not ideas.' Now natural history has to do in the first place neither with ideas nor words, as such, but with physical perceptions; and in general the great naturalists have been endowed not only with particularly acute senses but with physical activity. Their joy in these gifts has produced its own sort of emotion. They are natives, at home in the world, and become conscious of their kinship with the more palpable phenomena of nature.

It would doubtless be absurd to claim for naturalists any exclusive superiority in these regards. For example, the greatest of our translators of Greek plays possesses a sense of hearing that probably excels even the ears of W. H. Hudson; but in general naturalists are harvesters of the yield of their eyes and ears and become such because they see and hear and smell and move with more than the common pleasure. This delight is the direct inspiration of the prose in which they perpetuate their records.

The generalization may be ventured that it is an easy and pleasurable job to write down what you see vividly, as it is easy and pleasurable to write down what you feel strongly: and these parallel sources of inspiration produce different styles; but the naturalist has this advantage, that he is intent to express the picture for its own sake, without much thought of propaganda, or persuasion; and over and over again we may notice that the style, the manner of writing falls off when the subject degenerates into the abstract or the polemic or the scientific. Mr. Massingham's many very beautiful books supply scores of examples of such a contrast.

A number of sportsmen, who have little to do with letters as such, write well, but it is notorious that the fishermen excel the rest. Their sport is compact of sheer observation. Often, if they are wise fishermen, they just 'stand and stare' while the light and air shift, and the life of the water feels the changes of the day. By the river you abide in stillness and silence, while the grasshopper-

warbler churrs in the sedge, while the winged child of the water awaits the moment of rebirth. The figwort discloses at your feet its square stem and crimson flower. The watervole swims so close below you that you can see the silver drops of air prisoned in the net of its hair. The angle of the sun and every passing cloud are of moment. Pictures pile themselves up in your memory like cumulus clouds in sunset colours, till they force expression at some hour when their remembered beauty is even enhanced by being 'recollected in tranquillity', that is, in another tranquillity. How could anyone write badly about such scenes, if he lets himself float down the current of his senses and the mood they have invoked? Description issues as naturally as that part of speech called exclamation or interjection.

The number of writing naturalists becomes legion, and some few are more intent to satisfy the insistent demand for their experience than to be wholly true to their theme; but it remains that the number of new books, pleasant for their English as well as their subject, is very large, especially in those who make the least pretence. Mr. Hendy, from the base of his Somerset cottage, is a most charming writer chiefly because he is an observer of genius; and his latest book on the birds of Somerset is an example of a happy development in the writings of present naturalists: he concerns himself also with the humbler varieties of the human fauna, as well as with birds and butterflies and flowers, with the cottage as well as the nest. He is the happy countryman indeed. Mr. Massingham, whom we first knew as a naturalist, has become an expert on rural crafts. Mr. Fraser Darling, who has endeared himself to thousands of readers by his island story, has succeeded in bearing the weight of his exceptional knowledge lightly, because of his direct personal share in country energies. One hardly knows whether Mr. Warren, who sees England in the village, is more naturalist or rural annalist. Mr. Street, whose *Farmer's Glory* made him a sudden name, continuously widens his view to embrace many forms of sport and natural life, especially in the village; and his Wiltshire experiences find a certain parallel in the books of Mr. McGuffie and, may I say, of Miss Rider Haggard, who has something of Gilbert White's skill in making a simple diary vivid and readable. A place of distinction belongs to Grant Watson. Has anyone before him ever so lyricised in prose the less comely incidents of field and garden? He has made literature out of the

embraces of slugs and the handling of muck. His *Walking with Fancy* has a score of little pieces that suggest highly chiselled sonnets or finely cut cameos.

Most modern writers, in most subjects, lack body, lack volume, in comparison with their predecessors. We have, to give some casual examples, no White or Audubon or Waterton or Seeböhm or Gädke or Darwin or Alfred Russell Wallace (whose *World of Life* is too little regarded) or Jefferies or Hudson; or even the charming old-fashioned Johns or J. G. Woods; but there are today a full score of writers at least—Major Anthony Buxton, R. M. Lockley, 'Fish-hawk', and 'B.B.' are examples—who have seen and recorded in pleasant and vivid English a host of new observations that reach to the very core of science; and a few of them, with Eliot Howard in the lead, have permanently widened the circle of imagination, as happens after and in consequence of all real discoveries. Encircling twilight has a wider circumference for every increase of light at the centre. Eliot Howard broke new ground in his subtle perceptions of the nesting pairs, whose whole life at the breeding period is conditioned by the fight for exclusive territory, for a quiet home. At intervals in his close study his prose rises to great heights; and those flaming passages are always inspired by the direst zest of observation. The moorhen is a new bird since he spent more hours in watching it than the brothers Wright in watching buzzards. As they had ulterior objects they discovered nothing; he discovered much.

With him, as with some other naturalists, thought becomes almost another sense, so interwoven is it with perception. He does not translate an idea into words. He just tells what he sees and out of the seen events the truth directly emerges, like the goddess from the foam, fully grown and in panoply. Though not in any way comparable with *The Nature of a Bird's World*, which proved Howard's genius, *The Way Birds Live* by Edward Armstrong, who wears his learning like a flower, makes a singularly perfect appeal to the sense and senses of children. He says, 'We'll a birdy together', like Master Page, and adds this valuable truism: 'The more you walk and record birds' ways, the easier it is to understand what they are up to, and the more you understand what they do and how they live the easier it is to notice activities which are worth recording.' Nothing better in the literature of natural history has been written than some passages in *A Herd*



of *Red Deer* by Fraser Darling, one of the earlier books in which he avoided the temptation, not unnatural to a scientific observer, to give instruction, to become educational. He has penetrated to the very core of Scottish scenery. 'The burns fall to the waters of the Fionne loch, gleaming as white as its name in the June sun, and there are traces of the dwellings of men. I have heard the singing of women's voices and the laughter of little children in the place. Perhaps the play of wind and falling water made the sounds—I neither know nor care—I was content to listen in the beauty of the moment.'

A London wit once said that he had a Monroe doctrine for England: 'All islands are British.' Most small islands should belong to naturalists, so freely bred in Britain, for they appear to exercise an inspiring influence. R. M. Lockley almost automatically rose to a high place among writers and observers when he took the island of Skokholm, and continued to grow in favour as he toured the small islands around Britain. The famous American naturalist, Mr. Beebe, quite dropped his tendency to relapse into journalese when he wrote of the Galapagos islands. An island farm made Fraser Darling. Heligoland was a direct cause of the fame of Gädke. Perhaps Britain itself is a just small enough island to be responsible for the high proportion of naturalists within England. Shore and estuary are always compact of life, and the near boundaries give a persuasive definition to migrations, of butterfly and seed as well as of birds. More than this: our island by its geology, its surface, its climate, its geographical position and the nature of the humanized landscape, has subdued the country population to that they live in. They are naturalists by the compulsion of environment. It is truer to-day than when the German historian wrote of England that "The Compleat Angler" and the "Natural History of Selborne" are types of a style of literature peculiar to this country. In these classical productions we are introduced into the nursery of English thought, poetry—nay science itself.'

W. BEACH THOMAS

## SIDELIGHTS ON THE *DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN ENGLISH*

**J**UST over a quarter of a century ago, on the 4th of April 1919, in an address to the Philological Society, I gave it as my opinion that the future of English lexicography lay in the production of separate dictionaries dealing with the distinct periods in the history of the language, since each of these presents special features to which full treatment cannot be given in a comprehensive work, even one on the scale of the *Oxford English Dictionary*. I had been led to this conclusion largely by finding how much of the extensive material collected for that work from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century sources had perforce to be left unprinted, because its inclusion, to the extent it deserved, would have greatly increased the scale of the work, already large enough, besides giving to this period an amount of space out of proportion to those preceding and following it. The special dictionaries which I suggested (in addition to that of Anglo-Saxon) were those of Middle, Early Modern, and Modern English, the latter dealing very fully with the language from about 1700 to the present day, and forming a real thesaurus of modern and present-day usage. Outside of these lay the Older Scottish period, from the twelfth century (but mainly from 1375) to 1700, which could not be properly combined with the two English periods corresponding to it. It so happens that this is the only one of these four dictionaries of which some part has already been published, although the Middle English dictionary is in course of preparation.

It was not until five years later that I discovered I had made one important omission in my list. In the summer of 1924, while lecturing and conducting classes in the University of Chicago, I happened to be reading proofs of part of the letter U in the *O.E.D.* There, in two successive words, I was struck with the fact that the English evidence for these stopped in the seventeenth century, all the later examples being from American sources. This raised in my mind the question whether this lack of later English evidence was merely accidental or implied that the words had continued to be in use only in the United States. It then occurred to me that on the one hand no existing dictionary

supplied material for tracing the full history of American English, and on the other that the acceptance of American examples in place of English might sometimes be misleading and fail to bring out real differences between the two idioms. The obvious remedy for these uncertainties was the production of a dictionary of American English 'on historical principles'.

This idea, as I discovered before long, was not absolutely new. It may well have occurred to more than one of those who had occupied themselves with the study of American English, and had been clearly stated as early as 1913 by Dr. C. W. Ernst of Boston, in a review of one of the parts of the *O.E.D.*, to which he was a valued contributor. 'The American bonanza', he wrote, 'is in the hands of squatters; it is yet to be worked scientifically. That is impossible in Oxford; it must be done here, whether in Washington or the University of Texas is immaterial; only let it be done. It will take at least twenty-five years to gather the materials, and twenty-five years more to digest them properly. And neither dogma nor cash can help us; the thing needed is grace.'

Having however arrived at the idea of such a dictionary in my own way, I first communicated it to Professor J. M. Manly, who immediately welcomed it, and arranged a meeting with two other members of the faculty to consider the possibility of carrying it out. These agreed that there ought to be no difficulty in obtaining the necessary funds for the purpose, as it was known that there were prospects of liberal support towards research in the humanities from the General Education Board in New York. To make it possible for me to undertake the work I was offered a professorship in the University, which I had no hesitation in accepting, and began residence there in October 1925. The collecting of material for the dictionary began immediately, and during the following year the allocation of research funds made it possible to form a regular staff of assistants, while special quarters for the work were before long provided in the newly erected Wieboldt Hall. From that time onwards the work was carried on to the end without interruption.

The University of Chicago was in some respects unusually well suited for undertaking a project of this nature. The division of the academic year into four quarters made it possible for students to take part in the dictionary work either in one or more of these

as suited them, and the natural completion of tasks within each quarter helped to make progress more regular. The usual procedure was to give the beginners some instruction in the history of American English and in the proper methods of collecting dictionary material. Then each was allowed to choose a book, or had one assigned, from which suitable material could be selected and written out on separate slips. By checking the work done for a week or two, and giving guidance both as to selection and the way in which the quotations should be written, it was possible to get most of the material in a form ready for use in the dictionary.

Continuous work on these lines, carried on for ten years, naturally produced a very large body of select material, to which substantial additions were made from various other sources. Both the printed and unprinted contributions to the *O.E.D.* were made available by the consent of the Delegates of the Oxford University Press, and included much that otherwise could not readily have been obtained. A copy of the *O.E.D.* which had belonged to Dr. Ernst, and was rich in marginal Americana (as well as references for medieval Latin words), was generously handed over by the owner, a Harvard professor. Dr. Ernst's note-books, preserved in the Widener Library at Harvard, also yielded much that was of value. Among the smaller collections, one made by Professor Hempl while at the University of Michigan was frequently of service.

Even this did not furnish all that I had hoped to have. While planning the dictionary, I had thought that it would be possible to enlist no small number of voluntary readers, such as those who contributed so much to the foundations of the *O.E.D.*, and an appeal for help of this kind was widely circulated. The result, however, was unexpectedly meagre, either because those who might have been interested were too busy with teaching and other academic work, or because they failed to appreciate the cumulative value of even modest contributions. A widespread interest in collecting would have been of great assistance in obtaining material from local publications and the files of local newspapers. The value of the latter may be clearly seen in J. S. Farmer's dictionary of *Americanisms—Old & New*, in which much of the material is derived from the newspapers and periodicals of a single year, 1888.

To this regrettable lack of response there were, however, some

notable exceptions, such as Professor R. L. Ramsay of the University of Missouri, under whose guidance a dozen students made special studies in the vocabulary of Mark Twain, and Professor E. H. Criswell of the University of Tulsa, who studied with model thoroughness the language in the journals of Lewis and Clark. In each of these cases the original slips were sent for use in the dictionary, the material being also presented as a whole in separate publications.<sup>1</sup> Professor Josephine May Burnham of the University of Kansas also set students to work and contributed from the local press. Outside of the academic world the contributors were few, but Mr. F. W. Collins of New York dealt in a very thorough manner with several years' issues of the early *Boston News-Letter*. There can be no doubt that the dictionary would have profited greatly if more assistance of this kind had been forthcoming.

Before instructions could be given to students and others *how* to collect material for the dictionary, it was obviously necessary to decide *what* was to be collected. It was clearly out of the question to cover the whole vocabulary used by American writers and speakers from the earliest colonial days. Not only would this have been an immense task, requiring years of steady work, but it would to a great extent have been superfluous and of no particular value. Much of the material would have added nothing to that already given in the *O.E.D.*, and by its bulk would only have served to obscure the really significant features of American English. On the other hand, the collecting could not be confined to definite Americanisms, since it would be necessary that the collector should know beforehand, or spend time in trying to ascertain, whether a particular word or usage was purely American or not, and there was every chance that much would be missed through natural lack of such knowledge. Also, a mere dictionary of Americanisms would exclude much that was significant in connexion with American life, customs, industry, topography, and other matters of historical or cultural interest. After careful consideration of the two extremes it seemed clear to me that on

<sup>1</sup> *Mark Twain's Vocabulary*, a General Survey, by Frances Guthrie Emberson, in *The University of Missouri Studies*, vol. x, No. 3, July 1935.

*A Mark Twain Lexicon*, by Robert L. Ramsay and Frances Guthrie Emberson. *Ibid.*, vol. xiii, no. 1, Jan. 1938.

*Lewis and Clark: Linguistic Pioneers*, by Elijah Harry Criswell. *Ibid.*, vol. xv, no. 2, April 1940.

this account the dictionary ought to include 'not only words and phrases which are clearly or apparently of American origin, or have greater currency here than elsewhere, but every word denoting something which has a real connexion with the development of the country and the history of its people'. In the end it appeared that 'without going outside of these two principles of selection it has been found necessary to collect and present a mass of evidence far surpassing in quantity what anyone would naturally anticipate'.

Two classes of Americanisms, however, could only be partially represented in the dictionary—dialect and slang. The reporters who from time to time came to interview me were usually surprised to find that we were not compiling a slang dictionary; to their mind that was the very thing which one would expect an American dictionary to be. It was a new idea to them that slang was only a minor, and to a great extent a modern, element in the American vocabulary, and could be included in the record of this only in so far as it had justified itself by long standing or general currency. For the full treatment of it, and of dialect, it would be necessary to wait until special dictionaries of each could be compiled, corresponding to Farmer and Henley's *Slang and its Analogues* and Joseph Wright's *English Dialect Dictionary*. The reasons for the separate works were as strong in relation to the American language as a whole as to the English of Britain.

Although twenty-eight years' work on the *O.E.D.* had given me a fair knowledge of the main features of American English, there was still much that I had to learn, especially in respect of the sources from which the most useful material could be drawn. This was a matter which had not been fully considered in connexion with the collecting for the *O.E.D.* In fact, in the original plans for this, it was proposed that American readers for the dictionary should undertake the reading of English literature of the eighteenth century. This proposal was not carried out; American readers naturally looked for material nearer home and supplied not a little from their own literature. As a whole, however, they limited their collecting too much to the more prominent authors, including those whose language only at times deviated from English usage and who rarely employed an Americanism if they knew of it. The result is that many of the American quotations in the *O.E.D.* are not distinctive, and merely take their place along

with the English as examples of a word or use common to both countries. When too many are given in one article, they may create an erroneous impression of Americanism, merely because they have been accidentally used in place of corresponding examples from English sources.

It was therefore clearly necessary to look outside of the main literary productions of American writers, and ascertain what sources would yield a larger amount of truly native material. A little investigation made some of these quite clear. Throughout the seventeenth century, and well into the eighteenth, the township records of New England were a rich storehouse of the right kind, often made all the more valuable by the fact that some of those who wrote the entries were barely literate (especially in the second generation of the colonists), and not only used the natural spoken word or phrase but clearly indicated the pronunciation by the spelling. In both respects they frequently supply valuable evidence for English dialects of the same period, since the record of these is very limited for that date, and for ordinary English pronunciation. Their value on these accounts had already been pointed out by Professor G. P. Krapp in his work on *The English Language in America*. What remained to be done was to read the whole mass of those already printed, running to many thousands of pages,<sup>1</sup> and get everything likely to be of use copied out; much of this reading I did myself, greatly to the improvement of my own knowledge. Much similar, or otherwise useful, material for the same period had also been printed in the many volumes of such series as the publications of the Massachusetts Historical Society (1792-), the New Hampshire Historical Society (1824-), the Historical Collections of the Essex Institute (1859-), the Connecticut Historical Society (1860-), &c. Of a more formal nature, but often equally valuable, were the records and acts of the various State Legislatures. Compared with these sources, I found that few of the literary works of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries would repay reading until they began, towards the end of the period, to deal with political and administrative matters. By that time the formal writings of good Americans like Franklin, Washington, and Jefferson differed more

<sup>1</sup> On the whole these records are well edited, but unfortunately without indication of any change of hands in the originals, which would often be instructive in respect of variations in words and forms.

from that of their English contemporaries than they knew, and even when the words are the same they are beginning to be used with slight differences in connotation which subsequently develop into special American uses.

I thus found that, with a few minor exceptions, American authors earlier than 1825 did not consciously and deliberately introduce into their writings the language which for two centuries had been steadily assuming a character of its own. From that date onwards it was clear that in respect of language there were two distinct types of American literature, and that for the dictionary the more important was that in which the author had no hesitation in using Americanisms or deliberately made them a prominent feature of his style. To do justice to this involved the reading not only of a large number of separate works, but also of many volumes of the leading magazines, such as the *Knickerbocker* (1833-65), the *Southern Literary Messenger* (1834-64), *Harper's Monthly Magazine* (1854-), the *Atlantic Monthly* (1857-), &c. In addition to all these, there was a vast amount of printed matter not falling under the head of 'literature' which could not be ignored. Prominent in this class were the *Annals of Congress* and other administrative records, the agricultural reports of various State societies or departments, Government reports on a great variety of subjects, accounts of early western travels, many miscellaneous items dealing with such practical matters as canals, railways, or forestry, as well as works on geology, zoology, ornithology, &c. When it is realized that the bibliography appended to the dictionary contains over 3,000 titles, and that some of these cover many volumes, it will be evident that only by means of a large number of hands, working on a definite plan, would it have been possible, even in ten years, to collect the amount of material which had to be provided before the actual preparation of the dictionary could begin.

It was only after I had made a preliminary survey of the field on the above lines that I felt sufficiently acquainted with the essential facts to write the S.P.E. Tract (No. XXVII) on *The Study of American English* in 1927. During the following years I devoted much time to reading many of the sources above mentioned, literary and non-literary, extending to thousands of pages in all, a labour which had the advantage of giving me exactly the kind of material that was wanted for the dictionary.



For the selection of this it was often essential to know whether the word or use or phrase differed in any respect from the contemporary British usage, and the ordinary student collector could not be expected to possess this knowledge. Ordinary words, also, would readily be passed over by anyone who had no reason to suppose that they might be historically interesting. It might, for instance, be taken as certain that such a common word as *road* would not require to be specially noted, or that examples of it could readily be found if wanted. Knowing, however, the late date at which the word came into general use in England, I kept a look-out for its occurrence in the New England records, and in most of these found out that it was not used until late in the seventeenth century. In the Cambridge Proprietors' Records, for example, it first appeared in 1689; all the earlier entries had *highway*. The earliest example in the *D.A.E.*, of 1639, was obtained by a special study of the topographical terms in the Connecticut records, otherwise it might easily have been overlooked. The word was wanted for the dictionary as part of the historical record, and had also to be illustrated in *country road* (1669-), *county road* (1739-), *state road* (1809-), *bridle road* (1775-), *back road* (1788-), and *side road* (1861-), all of them significant in relation to the development of the country. Of these only *bridle road* (with examples from 1833 and 1868) and *county road* (without date or example) are recorded in the *O.E.D.*

It was also to be expected that many examples of real, but not obvious, Americanisms might be overlooked by those who were so familiar with them as not to recognize them.<sup>1</sup> One whose acquaintance with railway travel was confined to the United States, for instance, would see nothing noteworthy in the use of *transportation*, *reservation*, *commuting*, *right of way*, *cars*, *coaches*, *chair car*, *freight car*, *depot*, *schedule*, *baggage check*, *engineer*, *train-man*, and various other terms, all of which would naturally strike one accustomed only to the British equivalents. As the same thing holds in connexion with so many other terms in daily use, I felt that not a little was gained by doing so much reading myself, leaving only the copying out of the quotations to be done by others. I hesitate to give any estimate of the number of volumes I read for this purpose, lest I might seem to exaggerate.

<sup>1</sup> Of these I have given many examples in my *S.P.E. Tracts* (Nos. LVI, LVII) on *The Growth of American English*.

Not all this reading of non-literary matter was mere drudgery. In the books and magazines, and even in the agricultural reports and similar works, there was much matter interesting in itself. In the reports, for example, there were articles on the remarkable passenger pigeons which came north every year in such immense flocks,<sup>1</sup> that some diaries for several weeks contained the solitary entry 'Shot pigeons', and which disappeared so mysteriously about 1880. To have read these articles gave special interest to an account of them in verse which was recited to me by a local poet, forming part of an epic on the early days of Kentucky which he had for some years been composing. In other reports, beginning in 1867, there were accounts of the Colorado potato beetle (or, more Americanly, potato bug), which reminded me that in my early days there was considerable apprehension that it might cross the Atlantic and become common in this country.<sup>2</sup>

Naturally this reading also made me better acquainted with American literature, for the works of many writers first appeared in one or other of the monthly magazines, and apart from these I did not entirely neglect authors of note in favour of the more obscure. Some of the latter, however, presented special points of interest. One whose work particularly attracted me was J. H. Beadle, who in 1873 published a well-written work, full of incident and interest, with the title of the *Undeveloped West*. Five years later a new and enlarged edition of this appeared as *Western Wilds and the men who redeem them*. The remarkable feature of this is the extent to which almost every paragraph of the earlier work is more or less rewritten, the alterations being for the most part purely stylistic. In particular, distinctive words of the earlier version are often dropped in the later, while ordinary words are replaced by others more appropriate or expressive. To make the fullest use of the author's rich vocabulary of Westernisms it was

<sup>1</sup> 'The passenger pigeon, or wild pigeon, . . . is very rarely met with except in communities of millions or billions.' 1857 *Rep. Comm. Patents* 1856, *Agric.* 148.

<sup>2</sup> 'The Colorado bug is a native of Colorado, and . . . was confined there till the potato was brought thither, which suiting its taste better than its original food, it commenced its fearful ravages, moving eastward sixty miles a year, destroying the entire potato crop in its course.' 1867 *Michigan Agric. Rep.* vi. 72.

'[The] Colorado potato beetle . . . spread rapidly eastward till it has now actually gained our Atlantic coast, where it only awaits opportunity to take passage to Europe.' 1874 *Ibid.* xiii. 106.

necessary to compare both editions throughout. Few literary works can ever have undergone such a complete revision.

While nothing on the scale of the new dictionary had ever been attempted, it was not without its forerunners, which showed an ascending scale of fullness from Pickering's slender volume of 1816<sup>1</sup> through Bartlett's successive editions of 1848, 1859, and 1877, Farmer's *Americanisms* of 1889, Sylva Clapin's of 1902, and finally Richard Thornton's *American Glossary* of 1912 in two volumes,<sup>2</sup> described on the title-page as 'an attempt to illustrate certain Americanisms upon historical principles'. In spite of all the fresh reading done for the dictionary, it was necessary to index all these works to make sure that nothing was missed which they contained. Not infrequently one or other of them would supply an earlier example than had otherwise been noted. This was especially the case with Thornton's collections, in which a success in noting early instances is remarkably prominent. It is also well to bear in mind that for many words his array of quotations is much larger than in the *D.A.E.*, in which it was necessary to limit the illustration to suit the general scale of the work.

Most of the prominent Americanisms had been so thoroughly studied by various investigators, such as Mr. Albert Matthews, that the dictionary has seldom been able to throw further light on their origin, when this is at all obscure. Thus such articles as those on *blizzard*, *bogus*, *Brother Jonathan*, *bunkum*, &c., usually do no more than state what had already been discovered or suggested by others, although it does frequently add to the information readily available with regard to their early history. Accident, however, did enable me to settle finally a much disputed question, the real origin of *lynch law*. Among the various theories which had been advanced the one which had been most generally accepted was that it took its name from Col. Charles L. Lynch, 'whose residence, at the time of the Revolution, was on Staunton River, Va.', and who died in 1796. Mr. Matthews, however, after a careful study of all the suggestions, had decided that none of

<sup>1</sup> *A Vocabulary, or Collection of Words and Phrases, . . . supposed to be peculiar to the United States of America*. Boston, 1816. First published, in substance, in the *Memoirs* of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, vol. iii, Part 1, 1815.

<sup>2</sup> Thornton had also collected material for a third volume, which was made available for use in the *D.A.E.*, and has since been published in the *Dialect Notes* of the American Dialect Society.

them could be taken as certain. What led me to the discovery, or rather the re-discovery, of the real Lynch was the reading of a work which otherwise yielded much useful material—the *Life and Letters* of Andrew Ellicott, an astronomer and surveyor of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. There I found that in 1811, in the journal of one of his surveying expeditions, he recorded a short stay at Oolenoy Creek in South Carolina with a Captain William Lynch, and added: 'Captain Lynch just mentioned was the author of the Lynch laws so well-known and so frequently carried into effect some years ago in the southern states in violation of every principle of justice and jurisprudence.' On my drawing the attention of Mr. Matthews to this explicit statement he immediately reviewed the case in his usual thorough fashion, and had no difficulty in confirming the accuracy of Ellicott's account. Subsequently I discovered, also by accident, that the facts had been clearly stated as early as 1836 in the *Southern Literary Messenger*, in an article by its editor at that date, Edgar Allan Poe, beginning with 'Frequent inquiry has been made within the last year as to the origin of Lynch's law. . . . It will be perceived from the annexed paper, that the law, so called, originated in 1780, in Pittsylvania, Virginia. Colonel William Lynch, of that county was its author.' The annexed paper was a formal document, signed by Lynch and a number of his neighbours, binding themselves to maintain law and order in their district of Virginia. The true account was also given at a later date by a contributor to *Harper's Magazine*, on the authority of one who had known Lynch. Both these statements had been strangely overlooked or disregarded, and the real originator of *Lynch's law* (the earliest form of the phrase) might still have remained obscure but for the publication of Ellicott's journal in 1908.

It was also by accident that I discovered how Kentucky received the name of 'the dark and bloody ground', for which Thornton had found no earlier evidence than 1833. In the first volume of the *Virginia State Papers* I found the account of an inquiry into an attempt made by a certain Henderson and others to purchase land from the Indians. In this inquiry evidence was given that 'when the said Henderson & Co. proposed purchasing the lands below the Kentuckey, the Dragging Canoe told them it was the bloody Ground, and would be dark, and difficult to settle it'. According

to another witness the chief said that 'there was a dark cloud over it'. This took back the origin of the phrase to 1777.

In the same volume I came across the earliest mention of *back woods* that has so far been noted. In the *O.E.D.* there was no earlier evidence than 1822, but Thornton had found it in the *Boston Gazette* of 1768. In 1742, however, a Virginia pioneer wrote on behalf of 'several of ours that were the first settlers of these back woods'. Starting in this obscure corner of a new country, *back-woods* is one of the many Americanisms which have long established themselves in general English use.

When sufficient material had been collected, or was otherwise available, to make the compilation of the dictionary possible, and the form which it was to assume had to be considered, it seemed to me that it would be very important to indicate concisely but clearly the character of each entry, so as to distinguish between real or apparent Americanisms and those words and uses which were (or had been) ordinary English. Without some guidance of this kind the dictionary would obviously lose much of its value, since the user would be constantly obliged to consult other sources of information to ascertain what he would naturally want to know. After some consideration I decided that the simplest symbol to denote Americanisms was the sign +, which might be taken to signify an addition to the general vocabulary of English. For all that was common to both languages the important point was the English dating, and this I decided to indicate by placing the date or dates, when later than 1600, between braces {} as being more distinctive than either ( ) or [ ], which would occur in other uses. All words and senses which were older than 1600 would be marked with an asterisk. The result of these devices can be readily appreciated from the following examples:

**\*Balance**

1. A political counterpoise or counteracting influence {1677-}.  
Illustrated by quotations from 1755 to 1802.
- + 3. The remainder; what is left; the rest.  
Illustrated from 1788 to 1907.

**\*Banner**

- \*1. A flag or standard.  
Illustrated from 1687 to 1887.
- + 2. A flag offered as a distinction for polling the largest majority for the Harrison ticket in the election of 1840. Hence fig., the foremost place or prize.  
Illustrated 1840 and 1900.

In the great majority of cases there was little difficulty in deciding whether the + could safely be employed, or in obtaining the requisite dates from the *Oxford Dictionary*. Uncertainties, however, were apt to occur from imperfections in the English record,<sup>1</sup> since the collecting for the *O.E.D.* had not been done throughout on the same lines as that for the *D.A.E.* These could frequently be solved by a little investigation in the most likely sources, but a certain residue still remain doubtful, or are being settled only by chance discoveries. Now and then new light from the English side would suggest, or require, deletion of the + mark.

While the first part of the dictionary was in the printer's hands, it occurred to me that a suitable motto for it would be the striking verse by Samuel Daniel which has occasionally been quoted with reference to the spread of English to America. Never having read *Musophilus*, however, I thought it might be as well to look at the context, and having done so found that a preceding verse and the following one were equally appropriate and deserving to be quoted. Accordingly the preface to Part I was followed by a page exhibiting these prophetic lines of 1599 :

And do not thou contemn this swelling tide,  
 And stream of words, that now doth rise so high,  
 Above the usual banks, and spreads so wide  
 Over the borders of antiquity:  
 Which, I confess, comes ever amplify'd  
 With th' abounding humours that do multiply.  
 And who (in time) knows whither we may vent  
 The treasure of our tongue? To what strange shores  
 This gain of our best glory shall be sent,  
 T' enrich unknowing nations with our stores?  
 What worlds in th' yet unform'd occident,  
 May come refin'd with th' accents that are ours?  
 Or who can tell for what great work in hand  
 The greatness of our style is now ordain'd?  
 What pow'rs it shall bring in, what spir'ts command?  
 What thoughts let out; what humours keep restrain'd?  
 What mischief it may pow'rfully withstand;  
 And what fair ends may thereby be attain'd?

Those who are inclined to doubt whether close literary parallels imply conscious or unconscious imitation of one writer by another

<sup>1</sup> Of these I have given various examples in the S.P.E. Tracts LVII and LVIII.

may be interested to know that I wrote the following passage six years before I read the first of these verses:

The runnels of popular speech, which had trickled underground for a century or more, come again to the light of day; they are joined by many more which have sprung up in the same obscurity; and together they swell into a stream which at its highest flood may well seem to change and obliterate the old banks and landmarks of the language. (*The Study of American English*, p. 204.)

I had either prepared or revised the copy for the first part of the dictionary before leaving Chicago in the spring of 1936. The remaining nineteen parts were prepared and sent to the University Press by the regular staff, under the direction of Professor J. R. Hulbert, whose co-operation in the work had been contemplated from the outset. By the highly efficient work of both the older and newer members of the staff, whose American background and special knowledge on many subjects was of the greatest value, the preparation of the copy went on steadily and rapidly, and the successive parts came out at frequent intervals, until the completion of the work towards the end of 1943. During those years the proofs, revises, and finals were mailed to me, read, corrected, and returned, with no interruption and little irregularity, even after the outbreak of the war.

After so many years of work, it is a source of satisfaction that the dictionary has been recognized as having attained the end aimed at, that of displaying as fully as possible both the growth and the riches of American English and its significance for American history. One reviewer has written: 'This dictionary is the American Language's Declaration of Independence. . . . Here is what also amounts to a cyclopedia of Americana and a history of the American mind.' And another has called it 'Not only a great achievement in lexicography but one of the most memorable of all American books'.

With such appreciation the lexicographer can fairly claim to be no longer the mere 'harmless drudge' of Johnson's definition, but to have proved that his work can go beyond 'tracing the original, and detailing the signification of words', and, in the words of the poet, to have shown 'what fair ends may thereby be attained'.

W. A. CRAIGIE

PRINTED IN  
GREAT BRITAIN  
AT THE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS  
OXFORD  
BY  
JOHN JOHNSON  
PRINTER  
TO THE  
UNIVERSITY













